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THE ABBESS.

LONDON:
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ST. JOHN'S SQUARE.

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Frollope

THE ABBESS,

A ROMANCE.

BY THE AUTHOR

OF THE "DOMESTIC MANNERS OF THE AMERICANS," &c.



J'ai vu l'impie adoré sur la terre ;
Pareil au cedre il cachait dans les cieux
Son front audacieux ;
Il semblait à son gré gouverner le tonnerre,
Foulait aux pieds ses ennemis vaincus :
Je n'ai fait que passer—il n'était déjà plus.

RACINE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
WHITTAKER, TREACHER, AND CO.

AVE MARIA LANE.

1833.

278.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

PHYSICS DEPARTMENT

1900

TO THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
FROM THE PHYSICS DEPARTMENT
RECEIVED

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

PHYSICS DEPARTMENT

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TO THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

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PHYSICS DEPARTMENT

THE ABBESS.

CHAPTER I.

Un cœur sensible craint le repos qu'il ne connaît pas.

J. J. ROUSSEAU.

THE castle of Albano, situated at the north western extremity of the Venetian Gulf, about half-way between Aquilea and Villa Franca, was one of the noblest private dwellings in Italy. It is now in ruins, but the relics which remain are sufficient to show both its magnificent extent, and the proud style of its architecture.

A too stately habitation is a heavy tax upon the owner of it; while it excites the pride of pomp, it exhausts the means of sustaining it, and it sometimes happens that the straightened heir is obliged to submit, within its lofty chambers, to

embarrassments and privations which he would have never known, had his paternal halls been burnt to the ground before he saw the light.

Theodore, the seventh Count d'Albano, who was in possession of the splendid castle of his forefathers at the time this narrative commences, felt this inconvenience strongly. So many retainers fed at his table, and so many more were maintained from his buttery, that his rents and revenues often fell short of his wants.

It did not, however, occur to him, that the dismissal of half this useless number might relieve him from his embarrassment; he thought but of the means by which his little son could maintain as many, and, as was usual in such cases, the only plan which suggested itself, was the obtaining a wealthy marriage for him, and consigning his only sister to the cloister.

Urgent as the necessity certainly was for some such measures, the Count d'Albano, while deeply intent upon putting them in practice, was too proud to confess, even to himself, that it was his poverty which drove him to do so; nor were

there wanting good and plausible reasons whereby to persuade himself and others, that he was actuated by nobler motives. That the high born Count d'Albano should seek a suitable alliance for his son, could excite neither surprise nor censure in any one, and that so pious a catholic should desire to dedicate a child to the church, was equally natural and laudable. The various circumstances which arose from the prosecution of one of these schemes, and the ultimate result of it, will form the subject of the following narrative.

On the 19th of June 1575, the day on which our story begins, every thing in the castle d'Albano announced the bustle of preparation for some important event. From the stately Count himself, issuing his commands from the hall of audience, wherein he delighted to keep his state, to the little lackey boy, whose business it was to obey every menial in the establishment, all, with one single exception, were actively engaged in preparing for the arrival of Geraldine d'Albano, abbess of one of the wealthiest convents of

female Dominicans in Italy, and sister to the present Count.

Twenty years before, she had left her father's castle at the age of eighteen, to commence her noviciate in the convent of Sant' Catherina's, near Ancona. At her own earnest request, the usual period of probation was curtailed, and she took the veil within a year after her entering the cloister.

From that period to the present, her life had been marked by devotion so profound, and zeal so unshrinking, that her fame had gradually spread itself over the whole Christian world.

On the demise of the Abbess of Sant' Catherina's, Geraldine d'Albano, though only thirty-two years of age, was appointed to replace her; and her youth was soon forgotten in the strict discipline, the undeviating sanctity, and absolute authority of her rule.

So great was the reputation which this extraordinary woman obtained in the church, that few chapters of high importance were held in any part of Italy, to which she was not invited; but

it was rarely that she did more than offer her prayers for the Catholic purity and wisdom of their decisions; three times, however, she had quitted her convent to assist at chapters, wherein affairs of extensive and important interest to the church were discussed, and each time she had swayed the judgment of her coadjutors in a manner so remarkable, as to have drawn upon her, in some quarters, the imputation of witchcraft; but this only served to exalt her higher in the estimation of others, and her name was honoured at Rome as that of one of the brightest ornaments of her sacred profession.

Lady Juliet d'Albano, the young niece of this celebrated lady, was the only person in the castle who shared not the pride and pleasure which her expected arrival excited.

Her mind was indeed in a state of most painful anxiety respecting the object of this visit; for many concurrent circumstances had given her reason to believe that her father intended she should return to Ancona with this dreaded aunt, and her fears suggested that this could only be

with a view of her ultimately becoming a member of her community.

It would be difficult, perhaps, to persuade any beautiful young girl of sixteen, to whom life had hitherto offered no greater vexation than might arise in the taming a wild bird, or teaching a frolicsome kid to follow her,—that happiness and goodness were only to be found within the shelter of a convent: but with Juliet the case was worse still, for her young heart had been already touched by that deep, overwhelming feeling of attachment, which must make any destiny dreadful, that banishes the object of it.

Under these circumstances, it is scarcely to be wondered at, if the young Juliet did not regard these zealous preparations with any feeling of pleasure.

“What a tumult is here!” she exclaimed, as she entered from a walk on the terrace which stretched its ample length along one side of the castle, “What are they about now, Olive?”

The waiting-maid who followed, stepped quickly to her side, and answered the question

with an air of more deference for the things spoken of, than for the beautiful young girl she addressed.

"Holy mother ! Signora, cannot you see that they are bearing the golden candlesticks from the altar in the chapel, and the flowers, and the silver Christ, and the beautiful little Virgin, and the best embroidered altar-cloth ? Cannot you see that they are carrying them across the hall to the great stair-case ?"

The pious waiting-maid crossed herself without ceasing, as she made the enumeration.

"I wonder Father Laurence chooses to have his chapel despoiled thus," said the young lady, "I protest I think it looks very like sacrilege."

"You forget whom it is done for, Signora, or for certain you would never say that wicked word."

And again the black-eyed damsel crossed herself.

"No, indeed, Olive, I do not forget," returned her lady; "I neither do, nor can forget, that my lady abbess aunt comes here to-morrow

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—I suppose all these holy things are for her chamber?"

"Yes, Signora—that is, not exactly for her chamber, but for her oratory."

"And our pretty chapel? Pray, is she never to enter the chapel, Olive? Methinks the stripping that of all its ornaments, is a strange way of preparing for so holy a lady."

"Santa madre de Dio! to hear you talk, Signora, as if Father Laurence would forget the chapel! Good pious man! I am sure he has been labouring with all his might to make it fifty times more beautiful than ever."

"And how has he contrived to do it, Olive, after all the best things have been carried away?"

"Is it possible, Signora, that you have never heard of all the beautiful glories we have borrowed from the church of the Santa Croce?"

"No, indeed," replied Lady Juliet, with an absent air; "I know nothing about it."

"They are all to be put up for vespers to-night, Signora.—Good Father Laurence told me all his plans, and he took me himself this morn-

ing to see where the holy lady's oratory is to be. 'Tis only what we used to call the east closet, inside the state chamber, but you will not know it again, when it is all finished. I will ask Father Laurence to let you look at it, Signora, when it is quite complete."

"It shall not need, Olive. When the apartments are prepared, I shall inspect them."

Apparently but little daunted by the haughty tone in which these last words were spoken, the flippant Abigail continued to prattle forth her observations and intelligence, as she followed her lady, who now moved on through the hall.

Lady Juliet opened the door of a saloon, which had been hitherto almost entirely appropriated to her use. Its ample oriel windows gave it an air of peculiar cheerfulness; and it was here that she best loved to pursue her occupations: but on now entering it, she was struck by a general change in the appearance of the room, the absence of many articles she had left there the night before, and the introduction of several others.

“How is this, Olive? Surely my own parlour might have been left untouched. Where is my cithern?—and the volume I was reading?—and my embroidery?—this is more like desolation, than preparation.”

“The saints guide us, Signora! It is really a wonder to hear you speak in that manner. There is nobody else in the castle, from the highest to the lowest, but would willingly have every thing belonging to them turned topsy-turvy, only for leave to look upon the Abbess, and that, even on their bare knees; yet you, who I dare say will be permitted to sit down in her presence, seeing she is own sister to my lord the Count, you seem to do nothing but complain, because some of your worldly things are put out of the way, to make room for her heavenly ones!”

“I would have all suitable preparation made for the arrival of my aunt,—but there can be no occasion to derange my sitting-room for that purpose.”

“May the holy virgin forgive you, Signora! Shall I tell Father Laurence what you say?—

dear good man ! I believe he would cry for vexation."

Lady Juliet made no reply, but placing her veil and gloves in the hands of her attendant, advanced into the room, and stood gazing at the altered appearance it presented. Then turning to her maid, who was still standing at the door, she bade her send her page.

The girl departed, and Juliet seated herself at one of the large windows. It was the view from this window, which beyond any other circumstance, had first occasioned her preference for this apartment ; and, in truth, Italy herself could hardly have furnished a lovelier landscape.

There were blue mountains for the back ground, and, nearer the eye, flowery upland pastures, stretching out to a dark forest of oak and chesnut.

But the most beautiful point, to the taste of Juliet, was where the sea became visible through a narrow defile to the left. The high ground on which the castle stood sunk immediately be-

yond the boundary of the garden, to the level of a little mountain stream, which, turning at that point almost at right angles, continued its rapid way towards the sea, between two steep banks, tufted with innumerable flowering shrubs. The eye was led through this beautiful opening, till at the distance of a mile it rested upon the bright bosom of the Adriatic.

On the farther side of this brook, the ground rose again, to an elevation nearly equal to that of the noble site on which the castle stood.

The sea is always a delightful object, and the portion of it visible from this favourite window possessed the additional interest of being frequently animated by a passing sail. The small sea-port of Torre Vecchia was situated at a short distance from the castle, and though not a place of much mercantile importance, many passing vessels used its sheltered little harbour and commodious landing-place, either for the sake of safety during rough weather, or for the private accommodation of individuals.

It was at Torre Vecchia, that the celebrated Abbess of Sant' Catherina's was expected to land, within the next twenty-four hours.

It might be either with the hope, or the fear, of already seeing the bark which bore the Abbess, that Juliet now fixed her eyes earnestly on a small vessel that had just appeared in sight. She would have given much to distinguish the colours of the little flag which floated from its mast, but it was impossible.

While she was still occupied in gazing at this distant object, the door opened, and a boy entered, who, from his stature, appeared not more than seven or eight years of age; but there was a keenness of intelligence in his bright blue eye, that seemed to indicate an intellect of older growth. Having carefully stopped to close again the heavy door, which to his tiny hands was no easy task, he sprung across the room, and dropping on his knees before the young lady, kissed her hands.

"You sent for me, Signora?"

"Yes, I did, Morgante; but I fear the morn-

ing task is hardly over yet. What said Father Laurence to my summons?"

"He laid his hand upon my head, and said, 'Go boy, go—you have done well to-day;'—and then—'come hither, Olive, I would speak with you.'"

The boy mimiced the good Father's voice, in a way that brought an irresistible smile to the face of his young mistress—yet she shook her head, and was about to chide him, when he exclaimed,—

"And how do you like it all, Signora?"

As he asked the question, he jumped upon his feet, and skipped round the room, pointing to all the innovations the apartment exhibited.

"Is not this grand, Signora?" bowing with mimic reverence before a small table, covered with cloth of gold, on which was laid a huge volume of rich and massive binding.

"And is not this holy?" he continued, pointing to a frame which lay beside it, containing the mystic emblem of two bleeding hearts.

A chair of state was placed near this table, with a velvet cushion on a stool before it. On this the little Morgante knelt, and bent forward, as if to kiss the feet of some one seated there. Then making the sign of the cross, he dropped his hands by his sides, and remained kneeling before the empty chair, with a look of whimsical veneration.

"Out upon thee, Morgante!" exclaimed Juliet laughing, "how am I to frame my features into decent gravity, if you play those monkey tricks before me?"

"Do not fear, Signora—when she is here in good earnest, you will only need to look at me, if you want to learn how it behoves a good Catholic to behave in the presence of a saint of the church."

Juliet smiled, but in a moment checked herself; "you would not be so gay, Morgante, if you knew as much as I do, about this visit."

"What do you know, Signora?" said the child, suddenly ceasing his grimaces, and coming close to her side,—“what do you know?"

"Nay, I can hardly say I know; but I suspect much suffering is in store for me. I fear—I fear——."

"Tell me all you fear then," said the boy putting his arms behind him, and shaking his curls back from his face. As he did so, his countenance expressed a degree of feeling and intelligence, so greatly beyond his apparent age, as painfully to show that either accident or disease had stunted the growth of the little creature, to whom this too speaking face belonged.

Such was, indeed, the fact; Morgante was near twelve years old, and nature, as if to atone, as she often does, for diminutive stature, had given him a mind, which already surpassed in acuteness of perception, and firmness of temper, those of many men.

Fortunately his health was unimpaired, and the strength and activity of his limbs greatly exceeded what their appearance promised.

"Tell me all you fear," said Morgante; "is it impossible for me to help you?"

"Alas ! I fear so—what can you do for me ? My fear is, Morgante, that my father will insist upon my returning with my aunt to her convent—and then—that I should take the veil there."

Tears started to the eyes of Juliet as she spoke.

"You see, Morgante," she resumed, "that neither you, nor those stronger than you, can help me, if this be so."

"But I can go to the Count, and tell him that Heaven will punish him, if he dare do aught so wicked."

"And what would that avail, poor boy ? You would be given over to the discipline of Father Laurence, and I should not the less be made to follow this dreadful Abbess to her convent."

"You shall not follow her against your will," said the boy sturdily. "But why do you call her dreadful, Lady Juliet ?"

"In truth, I am wrong to do so, for she is high and holy, and near of kin to my father. But they say, Morgante, that she rules her con-

vent with an iron rod, and that the pope himself defers to her on any point of doubtful discipline. I believe Father Laurence loves to frighten me, by telling histories of her severity; but, indeed, if my father have so decided, I would rather die than live."

The affectionate boy looked ready to weep, but still he sought to persuade her, that it was possible her fears were groundless. "But wherefore do you think, my lord, your father, has taken this project into his head? Has he ever told you so, Lady Juliet?"

"Not absolutely—but he has often hinted at it—sometimes he says that—noble as is the house of Albano, the counting the Abbess of Sant' Catherina's among its offspring is still its proudest boast."

"Well!—let him say so still. Perhaps he is right, Signora. If all the commendatories, ammiraglios, and generalissimos of his illustrious family, were as insignificant as ——"

Juliet frowned, and Morgante hid his roguish face from her sight, by slipping behind the chair

of state prepared for the Abbess. In a moment, however, he resumed his gravity, and again approaching her, he said, "Were I lady Juliet, neither count nor abbess, neither aunt nor father, should make a nun of me, against my will."

"That is easily said, boy—but how am I to help it? It is evident to me that my father's mind is set upon it—no day passes now, without his talking of the glory of seeing another daughter of the house of Albano ready to follow——"

"Tush, Signora! Is that all? Why, I have seen him point to the gigantic armour in the hall, and tell your little brother, who, God help him, is hardly stouter than myself, that he hoped some day to see him rival in renown, and in size too, I suppose, the prodigious ancestor to whom that suit belonged. Surely a little strutting from my lord the Count need not alarm you."

"But Father Laurence too is always hinting the same thing, and as for Olive, since this visit has been talked of, she seems perfectly bewitched. If I speak of a robe, she will answer, that Father Laurence is a holy man—if I ask for my lute,

she brings me my beads; and half the hours she used to spend in embroidery, she now passes in the chapel. I wish they would make a nun of her, Morgante, and set me to watch the goats that browse before her father's cottage."

"And yet, Signora," replied the young urchin, "I much doubt if the zittella be exactly the stuff of which holy church would choose her nuns."

While this conversation proceeded, the eye of Juliet returned, from time to time, to the little vessel before mentioned, which was evidently drawing nearer to the coast. "Your eyes are keener than all others, Morgante; can you make out the colours of yonder small ensign, which flutters from the mast-head of that little sloop?"

The page gave half a glance of his bright eye at the lady's cheek, and then, with half a smile, looked in the direction she pointed. "The breeze is too busy with it, Signora; were it still for an instant, I think I could tell. But stay a moment—I will run to the point, and soon bring

you as much news as the stains on that ribbon can tell."

The next moment she saw his little figure bounding lightly down the steps of the terrace, then away through a small postern in the outer wall of the garden, and again, after the interval of a few minutes, climbing, with the activity of a squirrel, the steep bank which rose on the other side of the stream, and which he had gained by a little bridge not visible from the window. For a few minutes more, she watched him darting in and out through the trees, till, at last, she lost sight of him entirely amidst the shrubby labyrinth of the receding bank. She still continued, however, to gaze earnestly from the window, and so completely was her attention fixed upon the little vessel, which, tacking up against the wind, teased her, by sometimes appearing to approach, and sometimes to retreat, that the door of the room was opened and shut behind her without her being at all aware of the circumstance. But the Count d'Albano must not be introduced at the end of a chapter.

CHAPTER II.

Pride is his own glass, his own trumpet, his own chronicle.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE Count d'Albano was, as he daily, nay, almost hourly boasted, the representative of a long-descended race of Italian nobles. His most remarkable quality, even in his own opinion, was being his father's son. Never did any man rest more securely upon the merits of others than did this present Theodore, seventh Count d'Albano. All that had ever been well done in field, or well said in council, by his ancestors, was just so much individual merit in himself. His small, regular, insipid features, though they spoke little else, were

not deficient in the power of expressing a feeling that might rather be termed self-adulation than pride, or of conveying, with little danger of being mistaken, abundant contempt of nearly all the world beside.

Though his life had passed without his doing one single act for the love of virtue, yet as he professed, and believed himself to be, one of the most religious men living, his conscience gave him but little trouble. For this there were two reasons: the first arose from an unceasing indestructible persuasion, that whatever he did, and whatever he said, was infinitely better than what any other mortal could have done or said under the same circumstances; the second was furnished by a saving faith in the unlimited power of absolution. His affections were not sufficiently strong to occasion him any uneasiness, and his life had hitherto passed with little other anxiety than what arose from the fear of not being able to take enough care of himself—to do himself enough honour—and of not teaching all the world to be enough aware that Theodore

Count d'Albano was the most dignified little nobleman alive.

There was, however, one circumstance to which he was rather fond of alluding, as a great and terrible misfortune to his race, and yet he contrived to derive individual merit and glory, even from this.

His mother was an English woman; a daughter of the noble house of Arlborough. So far all was well; and the emblazoned genealogy shone more proudly from the addition of so splendid a bearing; but she was a Protestant. This circumstance was perfectly well known at the time his father married her; for her family were among the most faithful personal friends of the unfortunate queen, Anne Boleyn; and they had never, even during the reign of Mary, compromised the integrity of their faith. But there were many reasons to induce the young Italian to overlook this objection. The lady was young, beautiful, and wealthy; and moreover he considered the business of her conversion as too easy, and too certain, to leave the slightest

scruple upon his mind. Whatever were the means used to effect this conversion, they failed; and it was known, beyond the possibility of concealment, that the present Count, as well as his illustrious sister, had a heretic mother.

What effect this inveterate heresy produced on her daughter will be seen hereafter; to her son it furnished an additional opportunity of displaying his Catholic zeal. He sought every occasion to proclaim his execration of her memory, and had a monthly mass performed in the chapel of the castle, to cleanse the soul of his father of the especial sin of having married her.

Though in general his character was made up of seemings, his superstition was genuine; education, habit, and weak nerves had all conspired to make it so, and the only feeling which his pompous phraseology could not exaggerate, was the satisfaction he felt in his near relationship to the Abbess of Sant' Catherina's. It had been reported in many circles at Rome, that Pope Pius the Fifth had been heard to say, that if the remainder of Geraldine d'Albano's life were

passed in the same manner as the years she had already numbered, her name ought to be added to the calendar of blessed saints. This had been reported to the Count, and from the moment he heard it, he had ceased not to importune the holy lady to honour the castle d'Albano with her presence.

It was a pleasant and easy voyage from Ancona to Torre Vecchia, and it appeared strange to many, that the invitation had never yet been accepted; but now, to the inexpressible delight of her brother, she had announced her intention of revisiting the place of her birth, and passing four days with him and his children.

The Count now entered his daughter's apartment accompanied by an ecclesiastic, who filled the situations of tutor to his son, officiating priest at the daily offices performed in the chapel, and confessor to the household. Father Laurence was a man who, living in any age, or in any country, belonging to any profession, or pursuing almost any line of conduct, would be designated (allowing for the variations of ver-

naacular idiom) "a good-hearted man at the bottom." There is no praise, perhaps, so lightly accorded as this; it is often bestowed on men guilty of notorious vices, and utterly devoid of principle. The secret of this strange approbation of evil lies in the unstinted toleration with which such characters behold the faults of others. A good-hearted man at the bottom will give his hand in amity to the living representative of almost any crime or weakness that can disgrace humanity. He will "poor fellow" the desperate gamester; "good fellow" the desperate drunkard; and "fine fellow" the desperate libertine; in return for all which good-heartedness, he expects to receive (and is rarely disappointed) plenary indulgence for all his own irregularities of every description whatever.

Such a man was Daniello Rossi, and no one had ever found good-heartedness at the bottom answer better. A fine base voice, with some talent for music, assisted to procure him popularity, and wherever he appeared, he was perhaps more welcome than many a better man might have been.

At the age of thirty-five he gladly exchanged the tedium and restraint of the cloister for a snug residence in the castle of Albano, and for twenty years Father Laurence had contrived to sustain the reputation of a good and pious man, with nearly every member of the household. He was indeed a confessor whom few establishments would be likely to quarrel with; he wore his religion as easily as his embroidered cope, and was much too good-hearted to torment his penitents by any undue severity.

With his patron he was an especial favourite; not having the slightest partiality for any opinions of his own, he the more readily adopted, admired, and lauded, all such as were uttered by the Count; and as he contrived, under pretence of official occupation, private devotion, or attending to his duties as tutor, to escape the intolerable bore of his pompous conversation during by far the greater portion of the day, he led as easy and happy a life, as ever fell to the lot of a monk.

“Can you find nothing, Lady Juliet,” said

her father, as he approached her, "Can you find nothing within the compass of your youthful powers, and not inconsistent with the dignity of my daughter, by which you could testify your sense of the honour that awaits you?"

"What honour, sir," said the young lady, trembling as she spoke, and with her head too full of what she feared, to believe that her father could address her on any other subject.

"How is this, child? You ask what honour? when the whole castle is in movement to prepare for the reception of the holiest abbess, and the noblest lady that Italy can boast of; and you ask—what honour!"

"The Lady Juliet meant, my lord——" began the confessor.

"Is it to the physician that I must speak?" resumed the Count, without paying the least attention to him: "Has some death-like torpor crept over you; or must I tell your confessor here, to examine into the state of your soul?"

"Neither, dear father, neither," said the poor girl; "I knew not you were speaking of my aunt."

“What else can I speak of, Lady Juliet? If this event does not occupy your thoughts, young lady, I believe you are the only person on my domain, who can say as much.”

The angry Count raised his well-pencilled, and coal-black eyebrows, into sharp elliptical arches on his smooth low forehead, as he spoke. This was a certain sign of wrath.

“Indeed, my dear father, I too am occupied by the same subject—but just as you entered—”

“Well, well, Juliet—say no more—this is no moment for me to doubt your proper feelings. The time draws near, my love, when all my proudest hopes for you are about to be fulfilled.”

Juliet said nothing, but she raised her young eyes, with fearful anxiety, to the face of her father.

He turned away for a moment, and then added—“Ask me no questions, Juliet. My noble sister shall herself explain the honour which is in store for you.”

He waited not for any reply, but stalked out of the room with a majestic step, whose echo

whispered to his heart as he went, "I am the Count d'Albano." Father Laurence followed him out, as he had followed him in, with a whimsical expression of weariness on his countenance; having been obliged to attend upon him almost constantly for the last two days, in order to assist in inspecting again, and again, and again, the metamorphosis of different parts of the castle, which were deemed necessary by the Count, in order to receive properly the illustrious visiter he expected.

The pretty creature they left, more and more confirmed in her fears by every word her father addressed to her, felt almost in despair, and exclaimed aloud, "What will become of me! Who is there that can help me!"

"Green and silver," cried the page, who entered at this moment, out of breath with the speed he had used to execute her commission; "green and silver are plainly to be seen on the little streamer that——"

But before he had finished the sentence the Count re-entered. Fortunately his attention was

entirely directed to Morgante, or he must have perceived the deep blush and agitated air which these words had produced on his daughter's countenance.

The fact was, that the boy, in his eager haste, had brushed past the Count in his way to the parlour, with less reverence than the great man deemed necessary; who feeling, moreover, some curiosity to learn the cause of this vehement hurry, turned round, both to chide, and to question him. The motions of the boy, however, were too rapid for him, and Morgante, unconscious that he was followed, had entered the room, and uttered the important words before he was overtaken.

"How now, sir? What does all this mean?" exclaimed the offended nobleman, with a tremendous frown. "Are you aware, sir, who it was you met in the hall but now?"

"Your eccellenza and Father Laurence," answered the boy composedly.

"How, boy?—You knew it was me, and yet you did not stand aside? What was your

business, sir? What was the occasion of haste, so utterly indecent in its consequences?"

Juliet hardly breathed; but she had no reason for alarm.

"I humbly crave your eccellenza's pardon," replied Morgante, "but I love to run, greatly better than to walk, and knew not that your eccellenza and the holy father objected to it. I will do penance for it, my lord, before I sleep."

The boy hung his head, and affected to look so terrified, that the Count was immediately softened, and said solemnly, "Not for running, boy, not for the mere act of running, but for having forgotten to pay due observance to your sovereign lord."

"Shall I seek Father Laurence now, my lord, to make my confession?"

"No, no, not at present—the Father is waiting for me in the hall, to proceed with the important business we are upon."

But here his eccellenza was mistaken, as Father Laurence had gladly seized upon the opportunity to escape; on returning to the hall,

and finding he was gone, the Count again entered his daughter's room, and solely because he did not know at that particular moment, how else to talk of the Abbess, and the glory of receiving her, he again addressed himself to the little page.

“Remember, sir page, we must have no fooleries now. Father Laurence, though ever too ready to assoil your misdemeanours, will not fail to punish them with a heavy hand, if practised near the presence of the most reverend Abbess of Sant' Catherina's—so look to it, boy—do you hear? and see that your behaviour is befitting this great occasion.”

Morgante listened with the air of a little monk receiving orders from his superior; but before the Count's speech was well finished, he seized upon a splendid rosary of fretted gold which lay upon the table, and began in a loud voice gabbling over aves, pater nosters, and credos, with the rapidity of a magpie in full chatter.

Juliet turned away her head, for, despite her anxiety, she could not resist her inclination

to smile. The solemn Count hardly knew how to look: he had never been known to smile at any jest that was not uttered by some one decidedly his superior in rank, and to scold the boy for saying a credo, appeared hardly warrantable. After looking puzzled for a minute or two, he turned to depart, saying, "So so,—that will do, sir. Lay down that string of golden beads, and tell your prayers by one more fitting to your station."

CHAPTER III.

God and our innocency, defend and guard us !

SHAKSPEARE.

THOUGH the Count was upon the occasion above-mentioned, as well as upon many others, perfectly unconscious of the playful roguery the page played off upon him, there was something in the boy's manner that grated against his nobility. In truth, neither the sharp wit, nor the bold bearing of Morgante, were at all calculated to win favour from the Count d'Albano, for both were often shown in a manner to make it doubted whether the urchin felt all the reverence, admiration, fear, and devotion, which was his undoubted due. So little, indeed, was he beloved by the lord

of the castle, that it is likely Lady Juliet's partial fondness for the poor child would not have ensured his continuance in the family, had not the manner of his introduction into it been such as to forbid his dismissal. The circumstances which attended this singular introduction were as follow.

About twelve years before the period of which we are speaking, the Count d'Albano, having acknowledged at confession some fault graver than usual, was enjoined by his confessor, Father Laurence, a penance more remarkable for its solemnity than for any thing of mortification or suffering attached to it. The Count was enjoined to pass the first hour after midnight alone, and in the attitude of prayer, on the steps of the high altar in the chapel of the castle. The building was splendidly illuminated for the occasion, and to prevent the feeling of the noble penitent from becoming too severely impressed by the awful solitude around him, the confessor himself, attended by the maggiordomo, was stationed in the little sacristy, adjoining the

chapel; but scarcely had they arranged themselves in the snug seats with which the apartment was provided, when they heard a loud cry from the steps of the altar. They both rushed towards the Count, who was kneeling on the highest step, with his eyes earnestly bent upon some object lying immediately before him, within the rail. The trembling penitent started to his feet, and catching the arm of the priest, exclaimed, "It lives, and moves! Father, in the name of all the saints in heaven, I conjure thee to tell me what this means!"

Father Laurence threw a supporting arm round his patron, while he ordered the servant to examine what it was, which had so greatly startled his master. No sooner had the man touched the white linen cloth, which enveloped the object of their curiosity, than the faint cry of a new-born infant was distinctly heard.

"Holy mother!" exclaimed the *maggior-domo*, lifting the child in his arms, and displaying it before the eyes of the Count and his confessor,

"This is a god-send, to reward the piety of his eccellenza."

"What can this mean, Father?" reiterated the still trembling nobleman:—"how could this infant come here?"

As he spoke, Father Laurence disengaged a small scrap of parchment that was fastened to the linen in which the infant was swathed, and by the light of the candles which burned upon the altar, he read the words—

DONUM DEI.

and then answered solemnly:—

"Whether by the direct act of God, or only by his will permitting the act of another, this infant has been sent to you in a manner which must command your protection and care through life. Fulfil this duty, my son, as you hope for prosperity in this life, and salvation in the next; and for this duty let your present penance be exchanged."

"I agree to it, holy Father," replied the Count,

well pleased to be excused from remaining any longer on the solemn spot.

“But what mean the words you have read?”
“These words,” replied the Father, “being interpreted, signify,

THE GIFT OF GOD.”

“So be it,” said the Count, directing his steps towards the sacristy. “Paulo, give the babe immediately into the hands of Dame Marietta, and charge her to be mindful of it.”

This gift of God was no other than our tiny Morgante; the Count himself certainly never felt any particular partiality for the little foundling; it was long ere he lost the sort of shy consciousness with which he recalled the fright his first appearance had caused him; but, fortunately, he was the pet of every one else in the castle. Even Father Laurence was often seen caressing the little Diodono, for such was the name by which he had been baptized, though the Lady Juliet had called him in sport “Morgante Maggiore,” which sobriquet had been so generally

adopted, that the boy himself had totally forgotten his real name.

It will be easily believed that a child so introduced into the family of a most rigid Catholic in the sixteenth century, was in no danger of being lightly dismissed; but he was in truth the sauciest imp alive (excepting when his affectionate little heart taught him deference), and, certainly, nothing less imperative than the circumstances above stated could have prevented his being whipped off the domain, long before the period at which our story commences.

There was, too, another reason which prevented the indignation of the Count from showing itself by any overt act of severity towards his daughter's page; this was the decided protection and indulgence which all his peccadillos met with from good Father Laurence. The Count d'Albano was much too good a Catholic to persecute a favourite of his spiritual director, and thus it happened that the little Morgante became a chartered libertine, and generally dared

to act and speak with more freedom than any other inhabitant of the castle.

This digression has been so long, that it may be feared the reader has forgotten that the Count had just concluded a lecture, and was on the point of leaving his daughter's parlour when we began it.

No sooner had he closed the door, than Morgante replaced the rosary on the table, and laying aside his roguery at the same time, knelt down upon the little stool on which Juliet rested her foot, and looking up in her face, remained silently waiting for her to question him.

"Green and silver, Morgante? are you quite sure, boy?"

"As sure as that I see you now, dear mistress; the vessel bore close under the watchtower headland, and I have seen that pretty bark before, dear lady."

"Say you so, my page?" replied Juliet, while her soft cheek dimpled, and her eyes sparkled with the brightness of some inward thought, "then thy day's work is not done, Morgante—

you must have another race through the thicket, and——”

“And about, and about, and about,” interrupted the page, springing on his feet, “till I get to the large chesnut tree, that stretches his long arms over the pool—just where the mountain stream, you know, stops a moment to take a last look at its own green banks, before it leaves them for ever, to plunge into the sea.—Well, lady, I am ready.”

“But I must write, Morgante.—Hush! that is Olive’s voice.—Now, try your wit in keeping her engaged, while I am in my closet. Yes, I must write,” continued Juliet, thoughtfully.

“I guessed as much,” said the boy, with a saucy smile, “and I must carry it: well, you shall have good time. If Olive were as slippery as an eel, I would hold her fast.”

The waiting-woman entered at this moment, holding in her hand a small basin, made of the finest amber.

“What do you with that, Olive?” said the

young lady, stretching out her hand, and attempting to take it from her.

“ You know I hold that basin sacred, it was my mother’s.”

“ Yes, Signora,” answered the waiting-maid, withdrawing the hand which held it, “ and Father Laurence says it is just the fit sort of thing to be sacred ; it is by his desire, Signora, that I have brought it hither, to hold holy water for the Abbess. See how well it looks on the beautiful gold cloth ; and the beads must lie just careless beside it,—like that.”

Olive occupied herself while speaking, in newly arranging the articles upon the table, according to her fancy.

Juliet looked vexed, but only said—

“ Well, well, Olive, be it as you and the father confessor please. I shall not care to sit in this parlour now, it looks no longer mine. You may do what you will with it. I will go to my own room—my embroidery, my books, my cithern—I suppose I shall find them all there?”

“ Yes, sure, Signora, they have all been moved

very carefully; Father Laurence carried the embroidery himself."

"Since I have been so completely turned out here," said Juliet, "I do hope I shall be permitted to remain uninterrupted in my own apartment; I desire, Olive, that no more of your bustling preparations may reach me there—let me be quiet in one room, at least."

"Dear me, Signora, what a pity it is that you take things in that way; I am sure Father Laurence, kind, good man, would not have fixed upon this room for the world, if he had thought it would vex you so."

"Father Laurence? Was it not done by my father's orders?"

"Oh dear, yes, certainly; but it was Father Laurence that found out how well every thing would look here; and, you know, Signora, that his eccellenza is the best of Catholics, and very seldom contradicts what the confessor says."

"And that is, doubtless, the reason," said Morgante, "why Mistress Olive never refuses the confessor any thing he asks?"

The waiting-maid turned quickly round upon him, very much as if she purposed to give him a cuff.

“Hands off, pretty Olive!” said the boy, springing lightly upon the broad stone window frame; and placing his diminutive person in the open casement, he held by the mullions, while he swayed himself backwards and forwards, still continuing his conversation with her, while Juliet quietly left the room.

“Shall I tell you, Olive, what I heard Barnando say yesterday about your eyes?”

“Out upon you, foolish ape,” replied the girl; “what do you know about eyes?”

“Nay, but listen to me,” said the page; “listen to me, Olive, and you shall hear something that will surprise you.”

Olive, though still pretending to look very cross, continued to occupy herself in doing nothing, about the chair, and the table, and the footstool, while Morgante went on with a rhodomontade account of the admiration expressed by various serving-men of her beauty and

graces—all invented for the nonce, but perfectly answering the purpose for which it was intended,—keeping Olive completely spell-bound.

In the year 1575, the hour at which the great bell rang for dinner in the castle of an Italian nobleman was precisely twelve—not mid-night, but mid-day; and on the day whose history we are relating, this bell found Juliet shut into her closet, her fair fingers busily engaged in tracing words which seemed to move her heart as she wrote them. She started at the sound, and hastily ceasing her occupation, twisted a thread of silver mixed with green around a letter which she folded carefully, and had just concealed it in her bosom, when Morgante entered, followed by Olive, to hasten her to the hall.

The impatient Count growled forth a sullen inquiry as to “what had detained her?”

“My lady was preparing for the Lady Abbess, my lord,” said the saucy page; “my lady’s parrot too has been practising all day. I have been teaching him to say, Ave!”

This was spoken as he followed Juliet through the hall, to take her station at the upper end of it; the Count frowning all the time portentously, while the confessor, who was there, as usual, to bless the meat, hid the smile, which he rarely refused to the flippancies of Morgante, behind his cap.

Juliet looked very pale, and hurried forward with a faltering step. Before she reached her place, a boy, as beautiful as poets fancy Love, sprang from the table, where he was already seated, and fondly took her hand.

"Dear sister!" said he, "what is it, Juliet, that makes you look so pale?"

"Nothing, Ferdinand, nothing; I have been reading a sad tale."

And she said true, though she might have added, that she had been writing it too.

As she reached the table, the blessing was first spoken by Father Laurence, and then repeated from the bottom of the room by four powerful voices among the household, accompanied by a flourish of wind instruments.

The repast was ample, though not exactly such as might satisfy a noble appetite of modern days. The proud Count permitted no one, except the confessor, to eat with him and his children, though many in the rank of gentry dined daily at his cost, but it was at a table placed at the lower part of the hall. The pomp, the ceremony, the pageantry of eating, were all of first-rate dignity, and as this was not only dearer to the Count than the food he ate, but also than the air he breathed, he swelled as the grace was chaunted, and looked fully appeased as he took his place under the canopy that was suspended over his chair. Morgante stationed himself, as usual, behind his lady, and excepting that when he affected to bend forward to receive her orders, he contrived to whisper some saucy sally in her ear, the meal passed in silence. At length the Count spoke as follows:—

“In general, it is not my wish, as you well know, Lady Juliet, that any symptom of haste or carelessness of any kind, should appear at the hours of refection; nevertheless, on this occa-

sion, I am compelled to hint to you, that my people have need of this apartment. Your ladyship cannot suppose, that the Abbess of Sant' Catherina's is to take her repasts (if indeed she condescends to take them in public) seated on an humble bench, as you are now. Neither would it be fitting that the coronet which surmounts my own chair, should be seen above her head. It is, therefore, desirable, nay, altogether necessary that preparation be made, and the earlier we quit the hall the better."

"I am perfectly ready, my lord," said Lady Juliet rising, "and only wait for the grace."

"If you are ready," whispered Morgante, "it is more than the reverend Father is. Holy mother ! how he shovels in the viands !"

At length the grace was said and sung ; the lordly Count strutted forth, followed by his son and daughter, while the confessor tarried for a second behind, to drain one cup, before dishes, flagons, tables, and stools were all rattling together under the hands of the jealous menials. While they contended together, as to which could show

quietly to her chamber.

CHAPTER IV.

Love's heralds should be thoughts.

SHAKSPEARE.

"Now, Morgante, now is the time. Even Olive will have no eyes to watch you now—take this," continued Juliet, drawing the letter from her bosom. "Go quickly to the chesnut tree, and ——."

"And if a handsome youth, with light blue eye, and curls of gold, should chance to linger there?"

"Then give him this from me."

"And that is all? You expect not to receive any thing in return?"

"Oh, but I do!—and that you know, Mor-

gante: now fly—be quick—be cautious. You shall find me on the terrace.”

No lady ever had a fleeter messenger, and yet her thoughts outstripped his speed.

“Why does he not return?——He has been watched, and the letter taken from him!——He has not met him, but lingers still in hope he may arrive.”

It was thus the impatient young lady tormented herself, by conjuring up every possible species of mischance that could have befallen the boy. At last, and in as short a time as anything without wings could have done her errand, Morgante appeared before her; but unfortunately the whole length of the terrace was between them—she dared not run, for Father Laurence was eating figs at fifty yards’ distance, in the garden below—and, perhaps for the same reason, the boy thought it necessary to be equally deliberate in his movements, so that she had still some tantalizing moments to endure. The distance however diminished, though by slow degrees, and they were already near enough

for her to perceive the corner of a paper, which the well-pleased urchin permitted at that moment to peep out above his sash, when the voice of Olive was heard at a few paces behind her.

“His eccellenza wants you directly, Signora.”

“Tell him I will obey instantly,” said the young lady.

“You had better come *now*, Signora,—his eccellenza seems rather troubled in temper—I believe he is vexed because he can bethink him of no more preparations to make.”

“I will be with him immediately, Olive—pray go and tell him so.”

“Don’t you know, Signora, how my lord will look, if I go back and say—‘The lady Juliet is coming.’”

“Not if you say ‘*directly*’—I must gather these lilies first—they will droop before night, and I particularly want them to place before the picture of the virgin in my aunt’s closet.”

“You go to your father, Signora, and I will gather the lilies. Here comes Morgante, and he shall carry them for me.”

Poor Juliet!—the thing was impossible, and giving one disconsolate glance to her page, she obeyed the unwelcome summons.

Olive had very acutely interpreted the state of the Count's mind. He had just witnessed the completion of the last preparation that his genius could invent, and having endured for two minutes and a half the fretful vacuity that followed, it happily occurred to him that he might parade his son and daughter round the castle, on pretence of seeing that nothing had been forgotten.

When she reached the parlour her father was sitting with his head turned towards the door, and much impatience in his manner. Father Laurence, who had just entered, was standing on one side of him, and little Ferdinand on the other.

“I have sent for you, Lady Juliet, to inquire if you have yet gone through the castle, with a view of ascertaining if all things are in the order they ought to be?”

“I think, sir, I have seen every room.”

“You think so, Lady Juliet? Let me tell you, young lady, that you must do more than

think in such an hour as this; Albano's daughter must *know* that her duties have been performed."

"Shall I go now, Signor Padre, to examine the apartments?"

"Assuredly. It ought to have been thought of earlier; but happily there is yet time."

Juliet was almost out of the room before the pompous "Stay, lady!" could reach her.

"Stay, lady," said the Count, "we will accompany you."

He rose from his chair, and presented her his arm. She sighed away the hope of a moment, and took it. Father Laurence yawned, but prepared to follow, and little Ferdinand, taking his hand, dragged himself languidly along beside him, this being the third time that day, that he had been made to accompany his father and the confessor on a solemn circuit of inquiry round the castle.

The progress began; the Count praised, and harangued himself into perfect good humour, but poor Juliet only suffered the more severely; the better pleased he was himself, the more

incessantly he called upon her for approbation, and while her spirit was vexed, her thoughts absent, and her heart aching, she had to feign a lively interest about things utterly indifferent or disagreeable.

Ere they had proceeded far, Morgante joined the party, and without ceremony took his station, with an air of official dignity, behind his lady. The rogue well knew, that whatever had the appearance of respect and observance, was sure to find favour with the Count.

The manœuvre, however, was quite thrown away, no possibility of delivering the letter occurred, during the long hour devoted to this wearisome procession, and when it was over, the Count took it into his head that it would be proper for Lady Juliet to confess, and receive absolution from her confessor, before being introduced to her holy relative.

It required the exertion of all the little innocent finesse with which women are blessed (particularly in Italy), to conceal the repugnance she felt to complying with this proposal.

"I always prepare for confession, my lord—to-morrow morning I will be ready to see Father Laurence."

"To-morrow! If my zealous prayers are heard, and I have some reason to flatter myself that my prayers are not likely to be wholly disregarded, the vessel that bears the Abbess of Sant' Catherina's will be seen off our coast at an early hour to-morrow—no preparation must be remitted till to-morrow. Holy Father,—attend the Lady Juliet to her chamber forthwith. I trust you will find her mind in a proper state for the important events that are about to befall her."

The confessor, who had not at all more inclination for the business than the penitent, and who, for the last twenty minutes, had been comforting himself by the idea, that as soon as this most detestable parade was over, he should enjoy a little snug refreshment in his own room, looked at Juliet, in the hope that her quick wit would yet be able to devise some escape,—and most truly did he grieve to observe that her eyes were full of tears, and her whole countenance too elo-

quently expressive of dejection, to afford him the least hope of getting off by her means. He, therefore screwed his courage to the necessary point, and prepared to follow her.

To do Father Laurence justice, he was rarely very cross; indeed, he studied so unremittingly to keep himself in good humour by all the little indulgences within his reach, that it was not very often the demon of ill temper could find an opportunity to beset him; but now, his good-heartedness was ebbing fast, and by the time he reached Juliet's door, he felt well-disposed to inflict whatever penance he thought would plague her most,—for, as he reasonably enough said to himself, “if she had had the wit of a kitchen wench, she would have got off.”

Lady Juliet entered her room; Father Laurence following, and closing the door with no gentle hand, seated himself, and said, “Well, daughter! Begin.”

“I am in no fit temper to confess, holy Father, I am out of humour with myself, and all the world.”

“Waste not the precious time, my daughter,” said the confessor sullenly. “Think who it is who comes to-morrow! Beware!”

The patience of an Italian girl cannot last for ever,—that of Juliet had already been severely tried, and now with more warmth than prudence she exclaimed—

“Peace, peace, good Father, on that worn-out theme. I sicken at the name of this prodigious aunt!”

This was a very favourable occasion for the ill humour of Father Laurence to exhale itself—

“Unhappy girl!” he exclaimed, with an air of affected compassion, “You know not what you say. But I can tell you, Lady Juliet, you may live to look back with regret on the gentle rule of a confessor before whom you could venture to speak such words. You sicken at the name of your aunt? You sicken at the name of her, before whom mitred abbots bow?—of her, whose blood-relation to yourself is so soon to be merged and swallowed up in one ten thousand times more

near and holy—that of your superior, Lady Juliet!”

Poor Juliet was at that moment ill prepared to receive this full confirmation of all she most dreaded. She turned deadly pale, and the terrified monk, who had repented his premature declaration the instant he uttered it, thought that he had very likely killed outright the embryo promise of a second abbess of the house of Albano. He raised the half fainting girl in his arms, laid her on the bed, and bustled out of the room, to look for some one who understood “fits” better than he did.

On opening the door he perceived Morgante hovering about the passage that led to it.

“Morgante, boy, run for Olive—run for your life, dear boy—Lady Juliet is in a fit. Yet stay, I think you had better go in, and find some of her essences to throw on her—and I will go and seek Olive myself.”

The boy waited for no second bidding, but flew to her room, and the instant he entered it, closed and bolted the door.

“Dear mistress ! sweet lady !” he exclaimed, as he took hold of her hand—“Look up ! open your eyes, and see what I have brought for you.”

It appeared that the faintness had suddenly passed away, for Lady Juliet immediately obeyed the voice of her little messenger, and the next moment held the dear letter she had so ardently longed for between her fingers. The mere possession of it seemed to cure all her sorrows, but she was obliged immediately to conceal it, unread, within the folds of her dress, for steps were heard rapidly approaching.

Morgante, now become the most meek and quiet-looking page in the world, hastened to open the door, and Father Laurence re-entered accompanied by Olive.

Juliet felt that it was necessary to disguise in some degree the perfect cure that had been wrought in the absence of the confessor. It was easy enough to lie with her eyes shut, but less so, to check the smile which she felt treacherously playing round her lips as she pressed to her

bosom the bit of magical paper which the page had given her.

It is true she knew not what it contained—it might be cold sincerity—it might be impassioned falsehood—or ungenerous boldness; but none of these dreadful possibilities occurred to Juliet. There is something so beautifully confiding in the natural feeling of a woman's heart, that she will never doubt till she has been taught to do so. But with all this gladness in her bosom, it was necessary that she should seem both sick and sorrowful.

“Let me be quiet—and alone, Olive. Holy Father, will you excuse my confession for this evening?”

“Surely, my dear daughter, and grant you withal, full absolution. So rest quietly, dear child.—Come, Olive—Lady Juliet must be left alone.”

“Let Morgante sit by me,” said the young lady faintly.

“He shall, he shall, my child.—Do you hear, boy? Sit down quietly on that stool, make no

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“You go to your father, Signora, and I will gather the lilies. Here comes Morgante, and he shall carry them for me.”

Poor Juliet!—the thing was impossible, and giving one disconsolate glance to her page, she obeyed the unwelcome summons.

Olive had very acutely interpreted the state of the Count's mind. He had just witnessed the completion of the last preparation that his genius could invent, and having endured for two minutes and a half the fretful vacuity that followed, it happily occurred to him that he might parade his son and daughter round the castle, on pretence of seeing that nothing had been forgotten.

When she reached the parlour her father was sitting with his head turned towards the door, and much impatience in his manner. Father Laurence, who had just entered, was standing on one side of him, and little Ferdinand on the other.

"I have sent for you, Lady Juliet, to inquire if you have yet gone through the castle, with a view of ascertaining if all things are in the order they ought to be?"

"I think, sir, I have seen every room."

"You think so, Lady Juliet? Let me tell you, young lady, that you must do more than

think in such an hour as this; Albano's daughter must *know* that her duties have been performed."

"Shall I go now, Signor Padre, to examine the apartments?"

"Assuredly. It ought to have been thought of earlier; but happily there is yet time."

Juliet was almost out of the room before the pompous "Stay, lady!" could reach her.

"Stay, lady," said the Count, "we will accompany you."

He rose from his chair, and presented her his arm. She sighed away the hope of a moment, and took it. Father Laurence yawned, but prepared to follow, and little Ferdinand, taking his hand, dragged himself languidly along beside him, this being the third time that day, that he had been made to accompany his father and the confessor on a solemn circuit of inquiry round the castle.

The progress began; the Count praised, and harangued himself into perfect good humour, but poor Juliet only suffered the more severely; the better pleased he was himself, the more

incessantly he called upon her for approbation, and while her spirit was vexed, her thoughts absent, and her heart aching, she had to feign a lively interest about things utterly indifferent or disagreeable.

Ere they had proceeded far, Morgante joined the party, and without ceremony took his station, with an air of official dignity, behind his lady. The rogue well knew, that whatever had the appearance of respect and observance, was sure to find favour with the Count.

The manœuvre, however, was quite thrown away, no possibility of delivering the letter occurred, during the long hour devoted to this wearisome procession, and when it was over, the Count took it into his head that it would be proper for Lady Juliet to confess, and receive absolution from her confessor, before being introduced to her holy relative.

It required the exertion of all the little innocent finesse with which women are blessed (particularly in Italy), to conceal the repugnance she felt to complying with this proposal.

noise whatever—nor stir a step for your life. Perhaps the Lady Juliet may sleep for an hour ; nothing will so well restore her.”

At length they departed — and again the ready page sprang to the door and bolted it, in order, as he said, “to obey thy holy Father, and keep all quiet.”

The precious paper was then drawn forth from her bosom, it ran thus :—

“Once more, my love, I am here, and hoped it would have been yourself should greet me under the well-known tree. What is this piteous tale Morgante brings me? That they would make a nun of thee, my Juliet?—Fear it not, dear one—that shall never be. Geraldine d’Albano, then—your aunt, I mean—comes here to-morrow. This will not prevent our meeting, my sweet Juliet. Fear nothing—but that we should ever cease to love. Let your page meet me again to-night, to name the hour to-morrow, at which I may expect you ; postpone not our meeting an hour beyond what is

eedful for your safety. Alas ! I have no time to tarry—the vessel which brought me from Trieste waits for me. Whatever be the hour, the place must be the same. This dear tree, where now I write, is sacred, Juliet. Farewell, sweet love, till to-morrow.”

Juliet kissed the paper, and replaced it in her bosom.

“Think you, Morgante,” said she, “that you can go again to-night?”

“To-night?—This moment, lady—what shall I say to him?”

“This moment!—And what shall I answer, if they ask why you have left me?”

“Is it possible, so ill as you are, Signora, that you do not wish for some wild flowers to refresh you? Have you forgotten how beautiful the pale roses are, which grow under the olives yonder?”

“That is very true,” said Juliet smiling.—“Then go, Morgante; tell him that to-morrow evening, when all are at vespers——.”

“Now go to sleep, Signora,” said the boy as he left the room. “Nothing will so well restore you,” he added, in Father Laurence’s own coaxing whine—“I will be back in time to wake you.”

Lady Juliet did not sleep, but went down at the usual hour to join the family at supper in the hall, for she feared nothing more than being accounted ill, which always enforced confinement to her room. Soon after she had taken her place, Morgante entered gaily from his ramble; one quick glance of his eye, one slight movement of his childish head, told her that all was right. With this assurance she felt perfectly satisfied, and despite all her sorrows, retired to rest in no unhappy frame of mind. For one soft hour of lover’s watchfulness, she lay looking at the moon-beams as they fell in showers of broken light among the boughs that danced before her window, thinking of the morrow and the greenwood-tree, till her reverie melted into a dream, and then she slept soundly till the morning.

CHAPTER V.

" Beautiful spirit! —

—in whose form

The charms of earth's least mortal daughters grow.—

Beautiful spirit! in thy calm clear brow,

Wherein is glossed serenity of soul,

Which of itself shows immortality."

BYRON.

THE convent dedicated to Santa Catherina, of Siena, of which Geraldine d'Albano was Abbess, was situated at the distance of two miles from Ancona: it was at this place she was to embark on board a vessel, whose chief employment was to supply her convent, and, also, a monastery of monks of the same order at Ancona, with all that Europe could furnish. With a crew, almost as Catholic as if the vessel had been manned by

the monks themselves, and with a gentle steady breeze from the south, the holy party feared not to trust themselves on board.

The Abbess of Sant' Catherina's was thought to love parade, and it must be confessed that she gave some reason for the supposition, as she never moved without a retinue that might have contented a princess. She had not thought it necessary on the present occasion to retrench her state; for she knew the ample dimensions of the castle of her ancestors, and also, that whatever inconvenience her train might occasion, her brother would rather endure it, than abate one jot of dignity.

In that age the roads of Italy could not be traversed safely, without an armed escort; and it was by the express command of the Pope himself, that twenty stout men-at-arms were stationed at Ancona, to be ever in readiness to attend this distinguished Abbess when she journeyed, whether in holy pilgrimage to some honoured shrine, or on affairs of worldly necessity. Though a short voyage on the Adriatic

was not likely to put their valour to the proof, this guard still attended her. Four nuns of her convent, whose office, had the lady been royal, would have been that of maids of honour, a secretary, an almoner, her confessor, and her steward, together with about a dozen menials, completed her train. There were, also, mules of perfect manage and gentleness for herself, her ladies, and the attendant priests, together with twenty stout horses for her guard, and active beasts for the rest of her followers, in case, during her absence from the convent, she should have occasion to journey by land.

The morning rose with all the glow of Italian brightness. At an early hour the Count d'Albano was seen anxiously watching the direction in which the light boughs of the acacia bent their flowery tips. The wind was still favourable, and, therefore, according to the calculations made by the sailors of Torre Vecchia, the holy train might be expected to arrive before noon. A mass for their safety had been performed in the chapel of the castle every six hours since

the time fixed for their departure from Ancona, and the Count now commanded Father Laurence to perform the office (as they hoped for the last time on this occasion), somewhat earlier than the stated hour; that, this last duty of preparation being performed, the whole population of the domain might set forth to meet the honoured visitor.

The Count directed his daughter to station herself on the steps of the great gateway, attended by Olive and four other damsels of the castle, with instructions to descend before the Abbess alighted from her mule, and kneeling on the rushes, which were spread to receive her, thus humbly crave her blessing. He made her rehearse this ceremony three times, before he was satisfied that the attitude in which she placed herself was sufficiently respectful.

Having at length seen it performed to his content, he mounted his palfrey, with the young Ferdinand on one side, and his confessor on the other, all of them having their horses pompously set forth, and in this order they waited under

the beams of a burning sun, till Morgante, who was stationed on the heights to keep watch, should announce the approach of a vessel bearing a banner embroidered with the device of a ruby heart, the peculiar symbol of Sant' Catherina of Siena. Half the boys upon the estate were stationed at intervals between Morgante and the Count, that no moment might be lost in proclaiming the news. The distance to Torre Vecchia was about a mile, and the road to it was already lined by a multitude of devout persons, who were desirous of touching the robe, or receiving the blessing of the Abbess.

The Count's own followers, including not only every retainer, of whatever rank, within the castle (excepting those engaged in preparing the banquet), but every human being on his estate, who was not either too young or too old to walk, were ordered to place themselves at the entrance to his domain, and as soon as the holy cavalcade should come in sight, to throw themselves on their knees before it, remaining in that position as long as they could do so without

impeding its progress. When they found themselves obliged to quit this attitude, they were to rise and place themselves in the rear of the procession.

A shout, that ran along the telegraphic string of boys already mentioned, gave the expected signal; it was answered by another shout from the numerous body of attendants that filled the open space before the castle, and then all moved forward towards the stations appointed for them.

The Count d'Albano seemed to dilate as he sat stiffly erect in his crimson saddle—it was the proudest moment of his life; his very palfrey paced forward with unusual dignity, as it bore him along—the feathers in his cap waved proudly, and his cloak fell, as if conscious of the swelling heart beneath, into folds of statelier breadth than common. As he rode, he rehearsed to his heart the glory that was come upon him. She, to whom bishops and cardinals came in holy pilgrimage; she, whose future canonization the pope himself had predicted; she, whose conventual discipline had been the

heme of praise within the sacred conclave; this pride of Italy, this pillar of the church, this first among women, was his sister and his guest!

Poor Juliet, who was already wearied by the lectures, the rehearsals, and more than all, by the anxiety that preyed upon her spirits, seated herself languidly within the shelter of the hall, as soon as the party were out of sight, and soon almost forgot the weighty business of the hour, while thinking of one who, she well believed, was like herself counting the tedious moments that had yet to wear away before their meeting.

It is a comfort for the young and impassioned part of the earth's family, that neither father, aunt, nor Abigail, can read what is passing in the heart. It was in vain that Olive stood gazing at the pale countenance of her young mistress—that she tried to interpret the world of meaning that seemed settled in the dark lustre of her eye. She could make nothing of it. Perfectly convinced, however, that there was something passing in Lady Juliet's mind which she could not understand, she began to persecute her with

questions—perhaps as much for the purpose of punishing her reserve by teasing her, as in the hope of eliciting information.

“Is it not queer, Signora, when his eccellenza makes such a point that you should put on all your state, that your little pest of a page does not choose to show himself? It was of much use, forsooth, for me to embroider a sash for the urchin, if he is to be scampering over the hills, instead of showing off, in his proper place behind you. Where do you think he can be, Signora?”

“He was sent by my father to look out from the cliff.”

“Perhaps I knew that before you did, Signora, for it was Father Laurence’s thought the sending him. But I mean, where is he now, Signora? Have you sent him any where?”

“I have seen none of the boys return. They are probably amusing themselves by still watching the vessel.”

“‘*Themselves*!’ as if you thought, Signora, that proud little imp of a page would deign to amuse himself for a single moment with those

gamuffins! He must be gone somewhere else—have you sent him anywhere, Signora?"

"I wish, Olive, you would not fatigue me with questions. If you want the boy, you had better seek for him."

"No, indeed, Signora,—I know my duty better, my lord Count ordered me to stand four steps behind you—the page was to stand three—Margaretta, Joanna, Jeresa, and Ursula, two and two together, just three steps behind me. We are all here ready to pop into our places in an instant, and I only wish the Abbess would arrive this moment, and find you without any page at all."

Almost before she had ceased speaking, the little truant appeared.

"Sit down, Morgante," said Lady Juliet, kindly, "you look flushed and tired. Did you see the ruby heart distinctly?"

"Oh yes—and the holy ladies on the deck too—I saw them all—for I ran, after giving the signal, to the very verge of the rock that overhangs the town. They all look just alike, Signora:—but

I hope we are not going to have five lady abbesses at once.—What would become of my lord Count !”

Lady Juliet now rose, and descending the steps, she walked through the court-yard to the esplanade in front of it. The page and Olive followed her. The heat was intense, and neither from the forest of noble oaks which faced the castle, at the distance of three hundred yards, nor from the pastures that stretched round it to the right, did the slightest sound proceed. Birds and beasts had alike withdrawn from the fervour of the mid-day sun. Juliet and Olive stood within the shadow of the gateway, while Morgante stepped out upon the glowing gravel before it. After a moment, the boy exclaimed, “There they are, Signora ! do you not hear them ?”

“No, indeed, Morgante,” replied Juliet stepping forward, “you do but fancy it.”

She listened, however, attentively, and presently caught a distant sound ; in a few minutes after, the cavalcade was so distinctly heard approaching, that she hastily retreated to the hall,

summoning the women and her page to be ready to place themselves immediately, according to the Count's instructions. It appeared to all, however, a long time before any further signal reached them. Juliet's heart beat quick, when at length the horses' hoofs seemed suddenly to reach the gravel of the esplanade.—In another moment she should see the being into whose power she was to be thrown for the rest of her life — if —

Her meditations were here cut short; several of the Count's serving-men, out-stepping the cavalcade, rushed forward, and laying their hands upon the already wide open gates, evinced their zeal, by endeavouring to stretch them wider still.

The next moment there entered ten men-at-arms, mounted on their powerful chargers, who ranged themselves on each side of the court; next came the four priests, who rode up to the steps, and took their stations two on either side. The holy ladies followed, and then the rest of the attendants.

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Juliet's eyes were rivetted on the female

group; all were robed alike, and the heads of all were completely enveloped in impenetrable black veils; but her father held the rein of one—the dreaded Abbess was before her.

Had not Morgante whispered in her ear, “Now lady, now, descend,” all the rehearsals of the morning would have availed nothing, so wholly absorbed was she in contemplating the figure that approached. Thus reminded, however, she stepped forward, with a haste as graceful as it was natural, and, as the Count turned the head of the mule aside, dropped on her knees and kissed the long white garment of the Abbess.

She could not look up to meet the eye she dreaded, but as she knelt, the holy lady bent forward over her, and the ample folds of her black veil fell around the head of Juliet. She shuddered.

“Rise, Juliet! rise, my child!” said a voice, in a whisper of such sweet gentleness, that the unexpected tone brought tears to the poor girl’s eyes.

She stood up, and now longing to look at the

ce she had so dreaded to see, fixed her searching eyes upon the veil; but it defied her glance.

Two grooms stood ready to assist the Abbess from her saddle, but giving her hand to the Count, he dismounted without further help. He led her up the steps, and through the hall into the parour, which had been especially prepared for her.

Juliet alone followed. Even the nuns remained waiting in the hall, till they should receive the commands of the Abbess.

On entering this favourite apartment, the Abbess threw aside her veil, and looking round it, exclaimed, in a voice of great emotion, "My dear mother!"

Juliet, who was about to approach, intending again to kneel, and ask her blessing, stood like one petrified before her.

"That the Abbess of Sant' Catherina's? That my father's sister?" The words rose to her lip, but did not pass them. It was not, however, fear that stopped them; she no longer thought of fear, no longer felt it; but astonishment, almost amounting to stupefaction took its place.

The works of Titian hung upon the walls; she had seen her own bright and youthful image in her glass, but the face she now gazed upon was so majestic in its loveliness, so touching in its pale and quiet beauty, that from mere admiration she now longed to kneel before her.

The expression of that perfect face, when Juliet first beheld it, was as soft and feminine, as its features were regular and noble. Tears fell upon the cheeks of the Abbess as she repeated, "My dear mother!—This was her own parlour, Theodore."

The Count seemed completely thrown out of his play, by this expression of natural feeling. Without replying to her words, he said, "My lady Abbess,—will you take this chair of state?—Juliet! kneel down, and ask the holy blessing of your aunt."

His sister placed herself in the chair he had led her to, but seemed unconscious of his words. Juliet followed, and falling at her feet, looked up in her face with an expression of love,

iration, and reverence, that could not be taken.

The Abbess examined her features with an appearance of deep interest. She parted her ringlets, and kissing her forehead, exclaimed, "Juliet! dear, precious child! you are very image!"

"The holy ladies, sister? What is your will? they to enter here?"

"Yes, sir—bid them come in."

Juliet was so struck by the altered countenance and voice of the Abbess, as she spoke these words, that she rose from her knees, as electrified. The voice was rich and harmonious, but the accent, that of absolute command; the features were a model of majestic beauty, but at that moment they expressed pride, reserve, and almost austerity.

Meanwhile the nuns, together with the four attendant priests, were ushered into the room; and Father Laurence followed, leading his patron's heir. The little boy was so completely re-struck by the appearance of the whole party,

that it was not without difficulty the confessor had induced him to enter; but the priest well knew that he must not appear without him. It was fortunate that he had so discreetly exercised his authority, for the moment the Count perceived them, he stepped forward, and taking the boy's hand, said—

“You are late, sir, in coming, where you should so much wish to be:—kneel down, my son.”

“Benedicite!” said the Abbess, extending her hand towards him. But neither by look nor action, did she relax the stately reserve she had assumed.

Juliet's eyes were fixed immoveably upon her—“Is it the same?” she said internally, “is that the face which a moment ago expressed such tenderness?”

A feeling of bitter disappointment fell upon her spirits, as she now watched her aunt. Sweet tempered, and affectionate in the extreme, Juliet's heart had melted within her, as she listened to the touching voice that spoke of a mother who

was no more ; and not only did her terrors vanish, but all her hideous forebodings seemed so many sins of injustice, which she longed to atone for by affection. No one was ever born with a more loving nature than Juliet, but few have been placed in a situation where there was so little to call their feelings into action ; her young brother, and her petted page, were long the only beings she could dare to love. Lately, indeed,—very lately,—another object had crossed her path, and awakened a sentiment strong in every woman's breast ; stronger still in those whose affections have not before been called forth,—but strongest of all in the ardent imagination and glowing heart of an Italian girl. Yet during the first moments of her aunt's arrival, she felt that she had still more love to give. Her imagination had been seized upon by surprise, at seeing a woman still in the meridian of her beauty, when she had expected, (with no very good reason perhaps) age, ugliness, and severity.

In young and affectionate hearts there is

always an inclination to love what they admire ; and before the unfortunate revulsion of feeling, produced by the Count's question, Juliet thought she had found a mother, sister, and friend in one.

But now, as she watched her cold and proud demeanour, and the haughty reserve with which she received even the adulation of her brother, she felt that, notwithstanding her attractive exterior, this revered aunt could still be terrible.

The remainder of the day passed in solemn stateliness. Juliet persevered in respectful and ceremonious attendance, but no look or word of tenderness recalled the vision of the morning. At length the bell rang for vespers. The Abbess and her attendant nuns entered the chapel by a private door from the Count's library, which opened upon a gallery overlooking the altar.

This gallery, which was used only by the Count and his children, had been, on the present occasion, surrounded with deep curtains of purple silk, that no curious eye from the chapel below

ght disturb the sacred privacy of the recluses' motions.

Juliet was commanded by her father to attend the Abbess to this private door, and to enter with her, if invited to do so; but if not, to retire, and to keep her station with the family below.

It was this arrangement, which, like all the rest of the ceremonials, had been repeated and revivified again and again, that had induced Juliet to fix on the hour of vespers for her assignation with her lover; she knew that the whole household would be in the chapel—that the service would be lengthened by a solemn thanksgiving for the safe arrival of the Abbess, and that by retiring respectfully, without waiting for the expected invitation, as soon as her father had opened the private door for the holy group to enter, she could be missed by neither party.

The little hand of Morgante trembled with eagerness, as he closed the door of the gallery upon the Abbess and her nuns.

“Now, lady, come with speed. He knows

that all is safe, and if we tarry, he may chance to venture too far on the way towards you."

Juliet bounded lightly along the terrace, down the steps, and to the postern door. The page unclosed it, and there, even there, within a hundred yards of all who must not see him, stood the fair-haired stranger.

CHAPTER VI.

Disse Morgante : o gentil cavaliere
Per lo tuo Dio, non mi dir villania ;
Di grazia il nome tuo vorrei sapere.

PULCI.

I FEAR that to the young ladies of England, of the year 1833, my Juliet must have already appeared (to say the least of it) a very thoughtless and imprudent person; and I have not yet told the worst circumstance of her foolish love affair. She actually knew neither the name nor the country of her lover. How she chanced to meet him shall be explained hereafter, though no extenuation of her imprudence will be found in the manner of it.

In fact, Juliet's only excuse lay in her most

child-like innocence, and in the peculiar circumstances of her position. She had never known a mother. The noble lady who gave her birth, died whilst she was still an infant, and no female had been provided, who could ever pretend to take her place. The mother of Olive had waited upon the late Countess from the time of her marriage, and her daughter, having been brought up in the castle, was chosen on the recommendation of Father Laurence, as Juliet's principal attendant, after she returned from the convent where she received her education. No single being was near her on whom she could with propriety bestow either confidence or affection. Her proud father was quite out of the question. Her young brother, though mild and amiable in temper, was incapable of being more to her than a petted plaything; and poor little Morgante, though the most faithful of pages, was hardly fit, with all his sharp wit and ready invention, to be the sole confidant of the beautiful and high-born Juliet. Yet so it was. Nevertheless, it is but justice towards Morgante to confess, that, in

the present instance, his discretion had shown himself to great advantage; for he had more than once ventured to hint that he heartily wished the young mistress knew something of her lover's name and rank. That the latter was noble, however, he found it was treason to doubt, and therefore ceased to glance at the possibility of it being otherwise; but that it would be desirable to know his name, was an opinion by which he held stoutly, and against this, Juliet had never brought any very powerful objections.

During the interview of the evening before, to which, as he brought only a verbal message, he thought he might wedge something resembling a question, Morgante had most respectfully insinuated, to him of the green and silver, that his having the condescension to communicate his name would be a circumstance likely to be extremely well received by the Lady Juliet d'Albano.

The young man laughed heartily, but betrayed no symptom of being offended.

“Let me be called Amadis,” said he gaily ; “the name would do excellently well, but should you think otherwise, boy, I have no sort of objection to your giving me any other your fancy may prefer.”

As this attempt was unsuccessful, Morgante made no mention of it to his mistress, but, as usual, she repaired to the assignation, fully determined that before she returned, she would take measures to learn what it so deeply imported her to know.

The meeting was all that lovers’ sweet stolen meetings must be—made up of rapture, anguish, fear, and hope. Juliet told him all—but alas ! he told her nothing, excepting, indeed, that she was dearer to him than his life, and that he would never permit her being immured within the hateful walls of a cloister.

“No, Juliet,” he continued, “that shall never be ; and, moreover, pretty one, I will have thee for my wife, or never press the hand of woman in marriage.”

“O tell me, then,” she replied, “tell me—

that it is so cruel to refuse—why is this mystery? Can you not trust me?—— I tell you all ——.”

Tears came to the eyes of Juliet as she spoke, in seeing which, the gay aspect of the young man was changed to a look of great disquietude; he withdrew the arm that he had thrown round her, and said, mournfully,—

“I have already told you, Juliet, that you must trust—or else abandon me for ever.”

“And shall I never know ——.”

“Distract me not,” said he, interrupting her vehemently, “with questions that I cannot answer. I love you—and will make you mine, or perish.”

“And with no stain, Sir, upon my noble name?” said Juliet, with more dignity than she had ever assumed in speaking to him.

The bright blue eyes of the youth fixed themselves upon her with a meaning that she could not interpret, while his lips displayed his beautiful teeth as they parted—not to answer her solemn question; but as it should seem to make a jest

of it, for a smile of irrepressible merriment took possession of his features.

The blood of all the Albanos rose to the cheeks and forehead of Juliet. Her lover saw it, and instantly changing the air of levity which had so deeply wounded her, replied in a tone as serious as her own, "Would to heaven, Juliet, no greater difficulties lay between us, than that of proving to you, how dear I hold your honour ——."

"Nay, I will not—I cannot doubt you—farewell!—farewell!" said Juliet, angry with herself for having for a moment been angry with him.

"Yet, go not, till you have promised to be here at the same hour to-morrow. There is much to render my remaining on this coast highly imprudent; but while your fate remains in this uncertainty, I cannot go. It must be settled soon—is it not so? When does the Abbess leave you?"

Juliet replied, by giving him all the information in her power; and respecting her promise of returning the following evening at the same

our, took her lingering departure, just in time to hear the last notes of the "Hosanna in excelsis," as she hurried past the windows of the chapel.

Exactly at the proper moment, the page unlocked the door of the gallery, and Juliet stood beside it with downcast eyes.

Her heart beat so violently, both from agitation and exercise, that she almost feared its strong pulsations would betray her. She blessed the respectful silence to which her duty restricted her, for to have spoken a single word she felt must have been impossible. Perhaps while rejoicing in her security, she forgot the heightened colour of her cheeks.

The Abbess walked a few paces towards her chamber in silence, with Juliet by her side; she then stopped, and looking in her face, pronounced her name, with the same sweet tone in which she had first spoken it. Juliet raised her eyes; but there was something in the glance she encountered, that made her instantly drop them again. There was no expression of curious scru-

tiny, and still less of angry severity in the glance—but there was a smile, so full of meaning, that she felt almost certain she was betrayed.

“Go to your room, my child,” said her mysterious aunt, “repose yourself—I shall not require your attendance again this evening, and will tell your father that I have dismissed you.—Benedicite !”

Once more within the shelter of her chamber, Juliet set herself to review all the events of the last agitating twenty-four hours.

Within that time she had heard the cloister pronounced to be her fate, by one who was only too well informed upon the subject; she had listened to vows of eternal love from one whom her young fancy clung to, with all the tenderness of woman's first affection—and—not the least important circumstance in these eventful hours—she had seen the saintly Abbess of Sant' Catharina's, so long unknown, and so deeply feared. Not all the tender recollections of that hour of love, not all the terror of her threatened fate, could long detain her thoughts, or even divide

with this last object of wonder, interest, mystery.

Why amid all the epithets of admiration so freely used by her father, when speaking of his

Geraldine, did the word *beautiful* never occur? It was many years since they had met, could he have forgotten her? Why had she been told that this extraordinary person was in the full pride of womanly beauty? What was her history? How had she already attained power and influence, so greatly exceeding that of any other person of equal rank?

To answer these questions was beyond her power, nor was it less so, to define what were the elements with which this extraordinary woman had inspired her.—Love, fear, and curiosity were equally blended, that she knew not which inspired her most. But more than all, perhaps, a strange smile rested on her memory.—What did it mean?

There was something very like enjoyment to her, after a day of such varied and strong emotions, in the perfect silence and solitude of her

twilight chamber, and the power of musing uninterruptedly on all the circumstances of her situation.—Had she been ten years older, she would have seen more reason for fearing, that her father's pleasure respecting her would be fulfilled, than that her nameless lover should find the means of preventing it,—but at sixteen, love and hope are too firmly united for common sense to divorce them, and her reverie was far from being painful. Happily for Juliet, her inquisitive handmaid was too agreeably occupied in showing off her eyes and her ribbons to the new comers, both lay and spiritual, to trouble her mistress with her presence, and she was still sitting deep in thought, unmindful of the darkness, when a gentle tap at the door, broke in upon her meditation.

“Come in,” she said, and her page entered, bearing a lamp, and a salver on which was placed a small cup of wine, with some dried fruit and biscuit.

Morgante was never unobservant, even in his most trickish moods, of any thing concerning Lady Juliet; he had this day stood behind her,

ual, both at dinner and supper, and re-
ed, that whatever dainties were put upon
late, she had no appetite to eat them; so
g discovered that Olive was deeply en-
in the performance of her various hospi-
duties, he possessed himself of the refresh-
above-mentioned, and repaired to his soli-
mistress.

iet, intent as were her meditations, was not
to be so interrupted. The gossip of her
page was always full of matter, and while
ding his attention by taking what he had
ht, she willingly listened to all he was
ing to say.

What think you of her, Signora? We did
expect to see any thing like that, did we?
, she looks like a queen—or an angel! I
d as soon havethought to see the Pope look
me, as an Abbess like her."

In truth, Morgante, my aunt is wondrously
like what I expected to see her.—What
Father Laurence concerning her?"

He seems as much afraid of her as the Count

himself does. I would, Signora, that you had watched him at table, as I did; he was showing off to the quiet Father Anselmo, that's the great lady's confessor you know, he was showing off to him, how much at home he was in the grand castle; he pushed the wine cup to the good father, who still refused it, and then he drained it manfully himself; but, as his ill luck would have it, just as his jolly face was withdrawn from the flagon, he met the lady Abbess's wonderful eyes wide open, and fixed upon him. Oh! you should have seen him, Signora," continued the boy, skipping with delight, "you should have seen how he tried to put his features back into seemly order: I looked at the Abbess then, and there was a smile upon her lip; perhaps, Signora, you have not seen her smile yet? I never saw any body speak before, without using their tongue, but her smile said plainly, 'Oh you drunken old varlet! you think that I don't see what you are about—but you are mistaken there, Master Priest; I can see almost as far into thy greedy, wine-bibbing heart, as God himself.'

That was exactly what the smile meant, Signora, I am quite sure of it."

"And Olive, Morgante, what says she to my aunt?"

"Why the baggage had the confidence to say to Father Laurence, with her saucy leer, 'Well, Father, I would be a nun myself, if I thought I should look as handsome in a veil as our Lady Abbess:' he whispered something in her ear that made her blush, and blush she well might, for her impudence—she look as handsome as the Abbess!"

"My dear Morgante," said Juliet, laughing, "your head seems absolutely turned by my beautiful aunt."

"Is it not a pity, lady, that she should be a nun? And yet what a state she holds! Perhaps she likes her power and her pomp, better than a husband and children."

"Very likely, Morgante, so waste no more regrets on her—she is a mystery that neither you nor I shall easily unravel.—How do her followers conduct themselves?"

“Of that, Signora, I know but little, for I have not been much among them.—I like that gentle old man, her confessor; as to her nuns, I will only say, that they are wondrously little like herself.”

“Who is with the Abbess now, Morgante?”

“Marry, lady, my lord the Count—shut up all alone with her in your parlour. I marvel he showed so much joy at her coming, for by St. Francis, he seems to stand as much in awe of her, as our village boys do of the dominie.”

“Tush, boy! a good Catholic always testifies respect before the dignitaries of his church, whatever relation he may bear them: they are now together then, Morgante?”

“Yes, Signora—and the lady nuns are shut up by themselves in the east parlour. Poor souls! I warrant they are tired enough of their company!”

“Well! good night, boy; it is time we both should go to rest. Tell Olive, she need not come to me to-night; her cares must be wanted for our numerous guests. Good night, Morgante.”

CHAPTER VII.

I am not of this people nor this age.

BYRON.

WHILE the Lady Geraldine and her brother were engaged in earnest conversation, after dismissing Juliet, the Abbess went to the parlour prepared for her, accompanied by the Count and his son; but finding the Count and his son were there, she signified her wish that they should leave her.

Hitherto the Abbess had taken but little notice of the pretty boy, who was considered by her as so very important a personage; but when he now looking at her timidly, she held out her hand, and drawing him gently towards

her, said, "This is truly an Italian face, Theodore, and a very lovely one; but Juliet, with the brow of Italy, has almost the complexion of England. She wonderfully resembles our mother."

The Count crossed himself, and his lips moved slightly, as if in inward prayer. The Lady Geraldine did not appear to notice him, but seating herself in the chair of state, made Ferdinand place himself on the cushion at her feet.

"And what are you to be, my pretty sir?" she said, caressing the dark ringlets of his beautiful hair, "A soldier? an ambassador? or a cardinal?"

"He is not yet eleven years old, Geraldine. It is at present too early to decide."

"Most surely.—I did but jest with him."

"Where is the Lady Juliet?" said the Count abruptly. "Methinks she is strangely negligent in her duty, not to be in attendance on you, sister."

"Not so, indeed. As we returned from

s, I remarked that she looked fatigued, and made her go to rest. I fear, my Lord, the reception you have given me and my presence has cost you trouble."

And Count Theodore lived half a century. His polite reply would have laid him open to the charge of plagiarism, for it was very like that of Macbeth,

The labour we delight in physics pain.

It was, however, he had, as he deserved, full credit for it, and the Abbess bowed her thanks graciously.

It now occurred to the Count, that the absence of Juliet afforded a favourable opportunity for conversing with Lady Geraldine respecting her, and he dismissed the boy to his rest.

"He is, indeed, a lovely child," said the Abbess, as he closed the door behind him.—"I have seldom seen a handsomer face."

"He is the last of his race, sister," said the Count, with somewhat of a pathetic whine, "and though I, of all men living, should and would be the last to refuse a child to the church, and

though I should consider the having another cardinal added to our pedigree as an honour, glory, and blessing, yet, as the race would be extinct in the case of Ferdinand's becoming as you hinted——”

“Do not think it, brother—I did but jest with the boy. You could not object more strongly to his being withdrawn from the world, than I should do.”

The vain father was delighted.

“It would, indeed,” he replied, drawing himself up, as if the better to sustain the weight of all his dignities, “It would, indeed, be doing ill to our country to place the eighth Count d’Albano in a situation that must prevent his perpetuating his illustrious house !”

“God forbid you should do so.”

“You are right, Geraldine, you are right ; so far the Catholic yields to the patriot. But you have taught us, sister, that a daughter, dedicated to the church, may bring as much glory to her race as the holiest cardinal that ever wore a hat. I, too, have a daughter, and I freely, joy-

, triumphantly, bestow her on the church. I shall return with you to Sant' Catherina's—there—with your good pleasure, she shall take the vows."

Juliet?"

Geraldine d'Albano was naturally so pale that a blush as now dyed her cheeks could not go unobserved. The Count was completely dazzled, and the more so, as her eyes being fastly fixed on the ground, he lost the assistance of any commentary which they might have afforded. A moment's silence followed, then the Count resumed.

"I trust, sister, that no levity in the manner of bearing of my daughter leads you to consider her as unworthy of the honour designed her?"

"Has Juliet expressed any wish to take the veil?"

"Juliet is very young, and has never, I believe, given a thought to the future in any way."

"Then you have not announced to her your purpose?"

“Never distinctly—I have sometimes hinted that a high calling was before her.”

“And how did she receive it?”

“She is so mere a child, that it would be difficult to judge what passes in her thoughts. It is you, Geraldine, who will, I hope, communicate this intelligence to her.”

“Should I find her ill-disposed towards our holy calling—you will, of course, abandon the idea of it.”

“Think not so lightly of me, Abbess of Sant’ Catherina’s. Though my fate has not given me occasion to display such strength of character, as we know has distinguished you, yet I trust I never have been found weak or vacillating. I intend my daughter for the cloister, and, assuredly, I can imagine no reason whatsoever, which, by any possibility, could induce me to change my purpose.”

To this declaration, pronounced with all the pompous obstinacy of a weak proud man, the Abbess made no reply; she continued to listen in silence, for some time longer, to the self-lau-

ery strain in which the Count delighted to
ulge; but, at length, taking advantage of a
rt pause, she rose and expressed a wish of
ring for the night.

Her ceremonious brother would not let her
ve the room, till he had summoned half-a-
re of lackeys to light her through the hall:
accompanied her himself to the foot of the
ircase, and took his leave for the night, with
agreeable conviction that he had impressed
with deep feelings, both of his sanctity and
dom.

While the noble brother and sister were thus
gaged, Olive, partly from curiosity, and partly
om good nature, was cultivating the acquaint-
ce of the nuns.

She did not, however, enter their parlour till
e had first satisfied herself that her cares were
ot wanted elsewhere.

Her good friend, Father Laurence, was en-
oying an hour's comfortable conversation with
he almoner, who was the only one of the

Abbess's party with whom he had succeeded in his attempts to be agreeable.

The other priests had already retired for the night, and the rest of the suite were engaged suitably to their respective situations in it, with the different members of the household.

"Is there any thing, dear ladies, that I can get for you, or do for you?" said Olive, as she entered the parlour of the nuns. "I fear you must find yourselves very lonely here."

"Not so, daughter," said the eldest of the party, "every thing is well ordered, and exceedingly comfortable."

"And so it is, indeed," said another, "but since the damsel is so careful of us, it is but right to tell her that sister Beatrice has been far from well ever since we landed. She complains of sad pains about the chest and stomach, and I am of opinion, sister Martha, that a cup of warm wine, well medicated with spice and sugar, would be of singular comfort to her."

"I will not deny but it might," replied the

recluse, "but it is getting late, and, I fear, might be giving more trouble than we would—but truly ——"

"Do not speak of trouble," said Olive, with suitable alacrity, "it is both a duty and a pleasure to wait upon holy ladies like you. But if you think, something nice and dainty, in the way of cakes or biscuits, would make the meal more palatable—and there is good store of such things prepared—I took care of that."

"I am sure she is fit to be a nun herself," said sister Beatrice, "so kind and thoughtful!"

Olive was so active in her researches, that she was assisted with a quickness, which not only proved her own zeal, but that of her assistants. She was attended by two inferior damsels, the one carrying a lamp, with a silver posset-dish upon it, of very convenient dimensions, and the other, a tray, containing sundry trifles, which the well-judging Olive thought might be beneficial to the invalid, and agreeable to her companions.

She had every reason to believe that her kind attentions were not displeasing to any of the holy

ladies, who not only partook freely of what she set before them, but entered with great affability into conversation with her.

“It is really a pity,” said the venerable sister Martha, sipping the cup which Olive had presented to her, from the cheering composition on the lamp, “It is, indeed, a pity and a sorrow, that such a sightly damsel as you are, should be affronted every day you live, by having the bold eyes of ungodly men cast upon you.—How well she would look in a bandeau and hood, sister Clara,—wouldn’t she?”

“She would be a perfect picture,” replied the nun she addressed; “there is certainly no head-gear in all Italy, that sets off fine eyes, like the bandeau of the White Dominicans.”

“But perhaps, daughter,” observed another, “you may have formed some earthly attachment, that would make it inconvenient for you to become the spouse of Christ?”

“You need not be afraid to speak before sister Martha,” said a third; “she is very good natured. Come tell us all your history—will you?”

live, who perhaps had some doubts whether
own history would be sufficiently edifying
to select an audience, varied the subject by
saying, "Oh, dear ladies! if you like to hear
tales of true love, you ought to be told that
which belongs, as I may say, to this very castle,
where you now are; and I only wish that I could
tell it to you as beautifully as Father Laurence
told it to me—I am right sure it would draw tears
from your holy eyes."

"Nay, good daughter, let us hear you tell it,"
said sister Martha.

"I do not think any one could tell it better,"
said sister Beatrice.

"I am sure I would rather hear you than any
other," said sister Johanna.

"Now, pray begin—pray do, Signora," said
sister Clara.

Thus encouraged on all sides, Olive replied
very modestly, "I will do the very best I can,
I believe, and I hope you will please to excuse me,
as my words don't shape themselves together,
those of a more learned speaker would do."

The four recluses urged her almost clamorously to proceed, and accordingly, having first carefully replenished the four little cups of her auditors, as well as her own, she began as follows:—

“A great many hundred years ago, Father Laurence I believe knows the exact time, but I have forgotten it, there was another castle, almost as big as this, at twenty miles away from it, somewhere near Marano, I think it was. The lord of the castle was a great warrior, but he was nevertheless quite young, and he fell in love with the daughter of the ancestor of my lord the Count—for you know, ladies, of course, that nobody but the ancestors of my lord the Count ever came near this place, that is, to own it, since the beginning of time. The young lady's name was Madalina, and a most beautiful lady she was, by all accounts. The story says, that she was nowise behind-hand with the warlike knight in her love, for she doated upon him to distraction, and that she proved in the end, poor soul.”

"poor dear lady!" softly exclaimed sister

"hush, hush! sister Clara—pray do not
interrupt:—go on, Signora."

"He loved him to distraction, and used,
every day he was expected at the castle, to walk
into the woods to meet him. Part of the
castle remains to this very day, to show the
place where he walked, but it was much wilder and
more lonely then, Father Laurence says; yet it is
difficult to think that some of the very same trees
were standing there to this day."

"Olive felt a shiver come over her, and
drank a little wine.

"But why?—why is it awful?" said sister
Clara, trembling.

"The holy martyrs protect us!—how blue
the camp burns!" remarked sister Martha.

"Go on, dear daughter—go on!"

"For the love of the Holy Virgin, don't keep
me waiting!"

"She walked out into that wood there," con-
tinued Olive, pointing with her finger to one

corner of the room; the nuns trembled, and drew nearer together. "She walked out upon a certain evening into that wood, to meet him. And now, ladies, you shall hear what is an awful warning—that is, for such poor perilous girls as me. I know it is not wanted by holy ladies like you, but it is known for a certainty, that Lady Madalina was thinking of her lover that evening, all the time of vespers, and that when the priest at the end, said Benedi—I can't speak it properly, ladies, but I dare say you all know what I mean?"

"Benedicat vos omnipotens Deus, Pater, et Filius, et Spiritus Sanctus," chanted sister Martha, in a loud nasal tone.

"Yes, yes, just that, sister Martha.—Well, at the end, instead of saying, Amen! she said, Giovanni! which was the name of her lover!"

The four nuns groaned, and crossed themselves.

"Some say," continued Olive, "that her rosary and cross fell off at that very moment, and that being too much occupied by her inward

of love, to remark it; she went out the chapel, and into the woods, without the mark of the Christian religion about her."

happy creature! And what became of her?" said sister Clara, with tears in her eyes.

"You shall hear. She had crossed the gate at the bottom of the garden, you can see from that very window by daylight, she had descended to the stream, and climbed the bank, and ran hastily into the very thickest of the wood, where she suddenly found, that instead of it being a bright summer twilight, as she expected, it was as dark as winter midnight. She stood still, as you may well believe, not knowing which way to turn, nor what to do; when in a moment she saw——Sister Beatrice, I am afraid our cordial has got entirely cold.—God bless you," touching the cup, "this will do you more good than nothing; why, ladies, you look as if you wanted something to warm you.—Let us set the posset-dish over the lamp, with a little more spice and sugar, and

just the least little drop in the world more wine, —here is plenty in the flagon;—there now, it will boil in a moment, and then there will be some comfort in it.”

None of the party objected to this experiment, but sister Johanna testified a little impatience when she perceived that the assiduous Olive, while spicing, sugaring, and stirring the mixture, appeared altogether to have forgotten her story.

“ Cannot you go on, Signora Olive ? let me stir the posset-dish.”

Olive yielded the spoon.

“ Where was I ?”

“ Where it was quite dark, and she was going to see something.”

“ Yes, truly ; she saw all in a moment—take care, sister Johanna ! you will overset the dish as sure as can be. Let me see to it, sister—it will be ready in a moment, and then we can go on comfortable again.”

This being evidently the best arrangement, both for the story and the cordial, it was quietly

ed to ; and the little cups being again
and another portion of cake distributed,
egan again with all the renewed comfort
predicted.

in a moment the wood seemed to be
up, as if there were hundreds and thou-
f torches, and candles in every tree, and
same time she heard the most violent
r and merriment all round her. You
ell believe she was terrified enough, but
ly her terror was changed to grief and
r she saw walking towards her——who
think?"

ay, tell!"

ho—but her own Giovanni, in full dress,
s if he were going to be married, that
t—and then comes the sorrow—for by
e was a most beautiful young lady ! She
aning upon his arm, and dressed like the
legant bride in the world. And as they
on towards the unhappy Lady Madalina,
l nothing, saving your holy presence, but

kiss, and make love to her—think how the young lady of our castle must have felt !”

“ Poor soul !” sighed the kind-hearted nuns.

“ She swooned away, for as you may guess, she could do nothing else, and when she recovered, she found herself in her own bed, but how she got there, she could never give any account. The young Lord Giovanni was never heard of from that day to this, though it was well known that he set out that very same day, to pay one of his constant visits to this castle. But he never got here, that is certain, and——”

At this moment Marietta brought word, that the Lady Abbess was in her room—on which the party hastily broke up, and the nuns, ushered by Olive, repaired to the chamber of their superior, to learn if she had any commands for them before she retired to rest.

CHAPTER VIII.

Il ne faut jamais renoncer au bonheur. Les sources du bien et du mal sont cachées, et nous ignorons laquelle doit s'ouvrir, pour arroser l'espace de la vie.

SAINT LAMBERT.

It was Juliet's habit to rise almost with the sun, and enjoy among her flowers the delicious coolness of the early morning.

Of her scanty stock of pleasures, this was perhaps the dearest, for she could enjoy it without danger of interruption.

Her lordly father would have deemed his dignity affronted, had he not believed that every inmate of his castle had, in greater or less degree, been occupied some hours before his rising, in preparing for his appearance among

them. Father Laurence always slept long and soundly, feeling a right to do so from the consciousness that one strong motive for occupying the post of domestic tutor and confessor, at the castle, was the freedom it permitted from those untimely bells, which were wont, at his convent, to drag him from bed, when his very soul was asleep.

Mrs. Olive was dainty and delicate; she had, indeed, repeatedly assured the family confessor, that if he wished to kill her, it would be only necessary to enforce early rising as a penance. The little Ferdinand was much too tender in health, to be suffered to fatigue himself;—and thus, of the few permitted to approach her, Morgante was the only one who ever attended upon Juliet's early rambles.

On the morning after the arrival of the Abbess, the little page, as usual, followed the steps of his young mistress into the garden, where she was enjoying herself in the midst of her flowers, as fair, as fresh, and as dew-besprinkled as themselves. She had on this morning an additional

for her early rising, as she was anxious to select the choicest produce of her flower garden to adorn the altar of the chapel before her entrance should enter there. For this purpose she and her assistant proceeded from one parterre to another; Juliet stealing their fresh and fragrant flowers, and Morgante bearing them after her, as her little arms could hold no more. She then led the way to an alcove, fronting the garden, and shut out with such a leafy labyrinth of boughs and vines, that it was almost impossible to get over it, as effectually to exclude the

she then told the boy to deposit his burden on a table within it, and set herself to arrange the bouquets, while she dispatched him into the garden to seek for strings wherewith to bind them together.

While thus engaged, she stood with her back to the entrance, and had continued so for some time, when a voice, which once heard could never be forgotten, pronounced her name. She started, and saw her aunt standing close behind

The Abbess had changed her religious dress for one of the same form and colour, but of lighter materials; and her head had nothing over it but the veil, which was now thrown back, leaving her features entirely uncovered.

Juliet, who had been greatly struck with the regular and noble beauty of her countenance, even when shrouded by the heavy hood of a Dominican abbess, now that she beheld it so much more advantageously, stood silently looking at her, with the most evident astonishment. At length recovering herself, she was about to kneel, and in the usual form, request a blessing, when the Abbess stopped her, and, kissing her forehead, said—"May the Being who made thee innocent, still keep thee so, my Juliet!"

Then laying her hand on Juliet's shoulder, and turning her eyes towards the rising sun, she continued, "This, then, is thy temple, Juliet, and this," looking at the little table, and taking some flowers from it, "this is thine altar."

"Oh no! dear aunt," said Juliet, terrified,

temple where I worship is the castle, and these lilies I have gathered for our altar."

The Abbess took some of the delicate flowers mentioned, and placed them among the dark of Juliet's hair.

They can appear nowhere to greater advantage than they do in your hair, Juliet. These white bells, each twisted into a little sable t, form a head-dress that a queen might

startled, and confounded, Juliet knew not to think, nor what to say. She feared to re the feelings of pleasure and affection, this familiar kindness seemed to authorize, she should have mistaken the meaning of the addressed to her; and while her aunt continued to look at her with smiling fondness, she was motionless as a statue.

Sit down with me, my dear child, and do not look thus terrified at seeing me. What is the fear, my dear Juliet? What strange tales they told you of me, that you should

tremble when I approach, and turn pale when I speak to you?"

"Oh! no, no," said Juliet, shaking her head, "no one has ever mentioned your name but in accents of praise and reverence."

The lilies fell from her hair upon her lap as she spoke.

"*'Umile in tanta gloria,'*" said her aunt, smiling, "you shake those lovely blossoms from your head, as if you knew not how well they become you; but come, dear Juliet, cease to tremble, cease to turn pale, and red, and pale again, when you look at me. Whatever I may be to others, I will never be terrible to you.—Tell me, my mother's image, do you think you could learn to love me?"

"Better a thousand times than I have words to speak, if I may dare to do so! Say but once, that I have leave to love you, and I know it will be for ever!"

"For ever be it then!" returned her aunt, embracing her affectionately. "You are a gentle and an innocent creature, Juliet, and as

might well deserve my love; but you have
m that touches me still nearer; you are the
picture of my mother. Young as you are,
a trace in the glance of your eye, in the
of your lip, in the sound of your voice, a
ablance to the only being who ever loved
to the only being I have ever loved.—You,
are desolate and alone.—You are now,
it, as once I was.—Almost!—I had no
d to help me.—This is not your case, Juliet,
re me—trust me, and I will save you.”

he powerful emotions produced by these
s deprived Juliet of all power to reply to

he Abbess continued—“ Juliet, my story is
ange one. I hope, ere long, that no reserve
exist between us; then you shall know me
tirely as I hope to know you. So it was
een my mother and her Geraldine, so let it
etween me and my Juliet.”

was with pleasure, much greater than she
any power to express, that the motherless
welcomed this proffered confidence and af-

fection; but so sudden and violent was the change this short half hour had produced in all her ideas, that she felt almost bewildered; she did not attempt to express this in words, but as she sat, holding the hand of her newly-found friend in hers, much of what was passing within, was legible upon her countenance.

“Dear child!” said the Abbess, reading her silent looks, “you hardly know what to make of me. All mystery shall cease between us soon—shall it not, Juliet?”

The delighted girl was about to express her earnest hope that so it might be, when she encountered the same gentle, but meaning smile, which had so discomfited her the evening before. She blushed, faltered, and was silent.

“Come, Juliet, it is time we enter now. My longer stay with you, may be remarked and wondered at. Change nothing, dearest, in your outward manner to me; let me be still the awful Lady Abbess for you in public; but in private, never fear me more.”

The party assembled at breakfast with all circumstance and ceremony that the Count demanded. The grace was long enough for a nun and an abbess, and every thing wore an air of such state and magnificence, that the lord of the feast swelled with the proud consciousness of his dignified station.

Juliet and her aunt, the repast appeared fully prolonged; but at last, like all other human things, it came to an end, and the Abbess retired to her parlour, sending a message, by her page, to her nuns, desiring them to meet her there.

After inquiring, with a stately kindness, for the health of each, she said—

You are at liberty, my children, to take exercise and recreation, as much as shall please you, within the limits of the castle-gardens; you will find them noble. For myself, family affairs of some importance will engage my time; I have, moreover, much to speak of, with my young niece. I shall, therefore, be debarred of seeing you near me; but you have your daily

duties of prayer to perform; and, as I doubt not, you have remembered your embroidery, I hope the hours will not hang heavy with you. The Lady Juliet will instruct her first woman, to show you the way to the gardens."

Juliet then addressed the recluses with much kindness, requesting them to ask for any thing they might want or wish for, that the castle could afford, and promised that the Signora Olive should immediately wait upon them in their parlour.

They retired, and the aunt and niece were once more alone.

During breakfast Juliet had cautiously sustained the ceremonious manner which her aunt had directed her to preserve; but now, she looked anxiously in her face for that look of sweet affection which seemed reserved for her alone. Nor was she disappointed; no sooner had the door closed, than the cold dignity of the Abbess relaxed.

"Juliet! my life and youth are renewed," she said; "I am surprised to find that I have

th hopes and wishes. I thought all that
en quite over with me. I must immedi-
ee my brother—after conversing with him,
summons you. Send your page, my love,
your father that I wish to see him here.”
er indulging in the freedom of a fond
to assure herself that she still possessed
asure so lately won, Juliet left her aunt,
ving dismissed Morgante with the message
father, she again retired to her room, to
te upon all the wonders of the last few

CHAPTER IX.

Quand on sent qu'on n'a pas de quoi se faire estimer de quelqu'un, on est bien près de le haïr.

VAUVENARGNES.

THE Count, upon receiving the summons of his sister, instantly obeyed it. He found her seated at the window, which commanded Juliet's favourite view. Her eyes were fixed upon the landscape, but she appeared deep in thought. She now wore the white hood of her order, drawn forward, so as nearly to conceal her face, while the long black veil, thrown back, fell over her shoulders. The Abbess saluted him, as he entered, by an inclination of the head, and pointed to a chair which stood opposite to her.

some moments both were silent, and it was evident, that each intended the other to

Though the Count had contrived to deceive himself, that it was utterly impossible withstanding the cold reception given to his devoted dedication of his daughter) for the Count really to oppose it, he yet felt at a loss to resume the subject; and the representation of seven generations of heroes bit his nails. The abbess, however, had determined that she would begin the conversation; and as she was in the habit of deciding upon one thing, and then another, the silence might have long continued, had not the Count d'Albano happily recollected, that, on this occasion, he stood too firmly on the glance of an eye, the curl of a lip, or all the eloquence of human wit, to shake him.

For a mother of the church to forbid the consecration of a maiden to its altar, was a proposition which appeared to him altogether incredible. The pope, the conclave, the inquisition must all support him; and thus encouraged, he drove from his memory the idea of a certain

glance, which had seemed to search him deeply the evening before, when he had mentioned the pious feeling, that had decided him to make a nun of his daughter.

“Have you announced to Juliet, sister, the honour which awaits her?” he began.

“I have announced nothing to her, Theodore, but that I love her well: you are happy, brother, in so sweet a child. Does she not recall to you, every hour of the day, our dearest mother?”

So many years had passed since the Count and his sister had conversed together, excepting for a formal half hour in the parlour of her convent, that while his daily increasing bigotry had been teaching him to shudder at the name of his heretic mother, he retained little recollection of the attachment, amounting almost to idolatry, which his sister had felt for her. His education, and a situation he held, almost when a child, at the court of Rome, had so early separated him from his family, that he remembered nothing of the mutual love, the devoted tenderness, which for eighteen years had bound this

er and daughter together in a country, and
ne, that seemed equally foreign to both.
, while for nearly twenty years the son
een heaping accumulating merits upon his
by public and private reprobation of his
er, the daughter was cherishing her me-
, with the fondness which a desolate heart
for what had once made its comfort and
y.

ttle sympathy, therefore, could be ex-
ed between them on this subject. Had a
ic been named in such a manner by any
, though that heretic had been ten times
mother, he would have known how to
ive it; but to accuse the Abbess of Sant'
erina's of falling away from the faith—
was quite impossible. The Count, therefore,
ained silent; so did the Abbess, for there
something swelling at her heart to which
could not give utterance.

t was again the Count who was obliged to
ak the silence.

Were I not certain, sister, that my daugh-

ter Juliet is as pure in heart and faith, as she is lovely in feature, I would not, for my golden spurs, have offered her as a spouse to Christ."

"What is your motive, my lord Count, for wishing to immure your only daughter in a cloister?"

While speaking these words, the Abbess threw back her hood, and fixed upon him a pair of eyes, whose glance no mortal, conscious of a purpose to conceal, could abide without quailing. It was in vain that he looked at the window, and then on the ground; that he turned his head, first to one side, and then to the other; her eye was still upon him, and he felt it. "What is your motive, my lord Count?"

"My motive, Geraldine? What can it be," and here he crossed himself, "what can it be, but the devotion of a pious Catholic, who, by the gift of his child to God, would atone for the sin of his father, in grafting on his pure and noble stock, a scion of accursed infidelity. It is the same motive, Abbess of Sant' Catherina's,

led to your own profession. May the
you have brought to the church be placed
account, and stand against the grievous
his heretical marriage !”

Twenty years had Geraldine d’Albano
schooling her features to speak only as she
have them, but the passion which now
within her led them to rebel, and, for a
moment, all of anger, scorn, and defiance, that
dark could speak, seemed darting from her

She half rose from her chair, and waving
her hand for him to leave her, almost pro-
duced the word which trembled on her
tongue; but ere “*wretch*” had fully passed her
lips, her habitual caution returned; she resumed
her stately, tranquil attitude, and said, “Leave
me, Sir; I have heard the name of a saint
heaven blasphemed—and must do penance
for it.”

It is impossible to describe the Count’s state
of mind as he left the room; to remain in it,
even for a moment, he dared not. Mortification
at once most bitter succeeded to the glow of pride

which had dilated his bosom, from the hour this visit from his sister had been promised him. Not only had the proposal, for which he had expected honor and thanks, been coldly listened to, and almost rejected, but that precise point in his character (the reprobation of his heretic mother) for which he had held himself entitled to supererogatory merit, was declared, by one whose word was canon law, to be a source of blasphemy. Enraged and confounded, the agitated nobleman immediately sought his confessor.

Fortunately that good man was not far distant, being engaged in giving a lesson in chanting to the little Morgante. He instantly obeyed his patron's call, and they retired together to the library.

Having carefully closed the door, the Count proceeded to relieve his bosom of the load which oppressed it, and immediately found consolation from the wise and pious counsel of the priest.

"Be calm, my son," said he, "disturb not your noble nature for so slight a cause; if the

Abbess, your most reverend sister, has so
a point about her, as to cleave with linger-
andness to the memory of an heretical
r, it is she must tremble, my lord Count,
u. Were she the pope and conclave all in
he dare not own so much."

ay you so, good Father? Have I, indeed,
upon this haughty woman?"

y, marry, have you, my son—if she has
n as you say."

he has, holy Father—she has—and she
l —"

For that," answered Father Laurence, "I
we must let her alone—for even if she
aught making mouths at the pope, I doubt
church could take cognizance of it. Not
hat her looks are most pernicious looks—
her yesterday—but no matter."

Yes, but it is, good Father, and great
r too—what saw you yesterday?"

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I believe—but let that pass. Now listen
my son—but first let me give you abso-

lution for the unseemly passion you have fallen into."

The Count kneeled down, and the Confessor muttered his "Absolvo te."

"And now, my lord Count, let us speak like men of business. As to your laying an accusation of heresy against the Abbess of Sant' Catherina's, I humbly presume you do not dream of any thing one thousandth part so absurd? Why, my beloved son, both you and your poor Confessor would be in the lowest dungeon of the blessed Inquisition, before either of us knew why or wherefore—not to mention that I have no doubt the devil would visit us there. No, no, my son, that will never do. Nevertheless, I think you might venture to give this proud lady a hint, that it is just possible an Abbess may be caught stumbling, when she happens to put herself into a rage with the most pious and illustrious nobleman in Italy."

The Count began to soften.

"You are right, holy Father, you are very right. It would ill beseem me to attain the

ty of my sister. For the love of the
ed saints and martyrs, I will abstain—and
they remember it when my soul is in pur-
y!”

They will, my son—they must—they

Nevertheless, as you were saying, holy
er, it were as well to give her a hint.—
think you of going yourself to visit

What should we gain by that, my son?”

Father Laurence, wincing at the proposal.
rely it is not I, who should attempt to enforce
her the profession of the Lady Juliet?”

And why not, good Father? It is you, who,
had the œare of her spiritual condition, and
so well as you can, testify, that she is wor-
o receive the honour intended for her?”

he Confessor uttered a sound, which at first
y resembled a whistle, but it ended in a
drawn sigh.

I have told you, once and again, my son, it
t be within the cloister, that our Lady Juliet

ing. Truly, I saw no cause for jesting—but she gave me the message as I have given it to you.”

“Go to her, my son,” said Father Laurence, “go to her without delay—these tears show womanly and hopeful, and should she, my son, be less gentle in manner, than to so excellent a brother she ought—remember—that she is the powerful Abbess of Sant’ Catherina’s.”

Thus schooled, the Count stalked off—but the rebellion which raged at his heart, was not very successfully concealed by his countenance.

Morgante had informed him that the Abbess was no longer in the parlour, but had retired to her own apartment; it was to this room, therefore, that he repaired, and was surprised, on entering, to find it empty. On looking across it and through an opposite door, which was that of the closet prepared as an oratory, the Count saw her kneeling before the little altar. Father Anselmo, her Confessor, who was standing before her, appeared to be pronouncing either a blessing or an absolution, for his hands were raised,

read over her head. The Count started, retired hastily, closing the door after him; perhaps, not sorry to have so good a pretext avoiding an immediate renewal of conversation with his imperious sister.

He had not, however, proceeded many steps from the door, when the Confessor overtook him. "The reverend lady is alone, my lord, and expects to receive you," said the gentle Father Benedict, as he stood respectfully aside to let the Count pass him.

No farther hope of escape remained, and the nobleman turned, and entered the room. The Abbess was seated at a table, with a book of religious exercises before her; her veil was drawn so much over her face, as almost entirely to conceal her features; but even so, the quietness of her figure, and the graceful repose of her attitude, were imposing. By some caprice of fortune, her brother was now as much disconcerted by finding her countenance hid from him, as he had lately been by the difficulty of avoiding to look at it.

Her first words were—"Be seated, Sir," and the mortified Count, though he certainly had never thought of remaining standing before her, sat down on the chair to which she pointed, as if in doing so, he committed a sin of presumption.

Some strong emotion seemed to shake the frame of the Abbess; at length she said—

"Never again, Theodore, as you value your peace here, or your eternal repose hereafter, trust yourself to pronounce the name of my most honoured mother. Never more will you hear it from my lips."

A silence of some minutes followed these words, after which, throwing back her veil, and showing a countenance on which strong traces of suffering, but no signs of anger remained, she proceeded.

"For twenty years—brother," (the word seemed to cost an effort), "for twenty years, I have been a stranger to my father's roof; but though duty obliges me to call another spot my home, I still feel the ties of kindred pressing closely round me. My destiny has forbidden

know the feelings of a mother, but she could bear your Juliet, would not, I be far unlike it. And your sweet boy you are happy, Theodore, in having such and engaging creatures always near you." Under the existing circumstances, this was by no means an easy speech to answer; but it was necessary to say something, so after a little hesitation the Count d'Albano asked his sister, if she did not think the young Ferdinand, extremely different from what he was when a boy.

"I think he is:—you can hardly imagine, sister, remembering as you must my long separation from you, what deep and tender interest I take in the happiness of your sweet daughter: she would be a rich and lovely gem in the coronet of the proudest noble of this, or any other land."

Had there been less of pressing necessity in the Count's decision respecting his daughter, he perhaps would hardly have found courage to pursue his purpose, thus decidedly opposed by his sister, of whom he stood so much in awe; but,

like all other embarrassed people who hit upon an expedient promising relief, he had persuaded himself, that Juliet once fairly a nun, all his difficulties would vanish. It was this gave him courage to say—

“You seem to mistake my purpose for her, sister Geraldine.—My daughter is intended for the cloister.”

“Bethink you well, Theodore, before you so decide. Juliet has many years of life before her, and the sentence which costs you so little to pronounce, must be sustained by her, through weary years of heart-sick hopelessness.”

“Is it the Abbess of Sant’ Catherina’s,” said the Count in unfeigned astonishment, “who uses this language when speaking of the sacred cloister?”

“None but herself, Theodore, could love your child so well, as to forget all else, when thinking of her happiness. Look out, dear brother,” she continued, rising from her chair, and leading him by the hand through the open window into the balcony—“Look on the scene

this young creature has learnt to taste of such as God gives it—The bright sunshine, delicious shade, the bounteous pastures, the blue sea—and then this fragrant world of sense—of all this, Juliet has been queen. I met her this morning among her gay parterres, the fresh air of morning playing in her hair—her smile, hope, and freedom glancing from her eye—Oh, brother, do not quench that bright young eye! Oh! do not——”

So deeply interested was the Abbess in the cause she was pleading, that her earnestness was perhaps greater than prudence warranted. The monk was not slow to perceive this, and resuming his courage, he said:—

I pray you, sister Geraldine, to tell me, if these be the doctrines of the church, respecting the dedication of young maidens to the cloister? The purpose was most holy, but if it be thus, I must submit.—Yet first, I will be assured, that you are at Rome. Excuse me if I leave you; I must forthwith dispatch a messenger to the Holy See.

It may be that the heresy of England has

prevailed.—I must know more of this.” “Stay, impious man!” exclaimed the Abbess with an emphasis that made him tremble, “Hear me! and learn to fear the God that gives me power to read the heart.—Your purpose—holy? Hear me rehearse it, sir.—To save your sordid gold, you would profane the altar and the word of God—you would force within the sacred troop of heaven-devoted maids, a poor young girl, who has no call from Christ.—I have but to record this charge against you in that tremendous court where sacrilege receives its earthly judgment—and you should quickly be, where lingering for years you might atone for it,—aye—in the deepest dungeons of the Inquisition.”

Perfectly astounded, mastered, and overpowered at his own weapons, the terrified Count stood aghast,—his eyes widely distended, and his hands raised as in deprecation of the sentence he had just heard.

“It is cruel, sir—it is impious. Yet still you are my brother—Do not rashly labour to make me forget this tie. Retire to your chamber,

Theodore, and when next we meet, I trust to find you in a better frame of mind."

Humbled to the dust, the Count again left the presence of his haughty sister. As he went, his head throbbing with passion, hatred curdling at his heart, and vague but burning hopes of vengeance brooding within him, he cursed the evil hour that had brought her to his castle.

CHAPTER X.

io mi riscossi
Come persona che per forza è desta.

DANTE.

JULIET, meanwhile, was still enjoying a degree of pleasure at the idea of having found a friend, which only one so desolate could know. She loved her little brother, she loved her kind and grateful page, but a friend—and that a woman too—one who could advise her, lead her,—this she had never known till now. Again and again she repeated to herself the words—"In private, Juliet, never fear me more," and the one little treasured secret, which lay at the bottom of her heart, became so painful, that she almost determined to tell this dear aunt all.

wild and strange adventure had alone increased the even tenour of her life, and though the impression it had made upon her heart and was great, that produced by the interview the morning was scarcely less so.

"she shall know it all," was the conclusion to which she finally came. "No reserve, shall poison so sweet an intercourse."

After she had made this resolution, one morn-
g, conducted to her chamber by Olive,
and in reply to Juliet's civil request that
ould sit down, said, "Not so, my dear child,
e to lead you to the presence of the Lady
s."

On hearing this most welcome mandate, Juliet
g to the door, and totally forgetting the
nger, in her eagerness to obey the message,
ready run half down the gallery, when the
of Olive stopped her.

Had Juliet been less absorbed, she must have
amused by the whimsical look of surprise,
d with no small portion of mortification,

which her maid's countenance betrayed. It is certain, that this most catholic of chambermaids had anticipated a very different result from the introduction of herself and her mistress to the Abbess of Sant' Catherina's. On the part of the young lady, she had expected to witness shyness, fear, and dislike; while she anticipated that her own share of the drama would have been, confidential familiarity on the part of the noble recluse, and a judicious display of piety and importance on her own.

The very contrary of all this, however, had ensued. She was by no means sure that the visual organs of the Abbess had as yet conveyed any consciousness of her image to that holy lady's sensorium, while it was sufficiently evident to the sharp-sighted Abigail, that Juliet already loved, and was fondly beloved by, her aunt.

She now called to her, in a voice of some authority:—

“Signora! Signora Juliet! What will the Lady Abbess say, if you treat one of her holy

this manner? If she had sent a dog to it could hardly have been treated with respect."

"Your pardon, sister Beatrice," said Juliet, backing, and kindly taking the recluse by the hand—"indeed, I meant no rudeness. My aunt in her own apartment,—is she not?"

"Signora," answered the nun solemnly, "it will be proper for me to announce to you that you are coming."

"So, then, good sister," said Juliet gently, she restrained her steps to keep pace with the assured movement of the nun. There was something chilling to the glow at her heart, in the formal manner of being ushered to the presence of her friend; but fortunately, she remembered her injunction, "Let me be still the same for you in public;" and, immediately assuming an air as grave as that of her conductor, she remained at the door of her aunt's room, until sister Beatrice entered it, and when, a moment after, she returned to inform her that she

might approach, Juliet did so, as demurely as Olive herself could have desired.

Sister Beatrice remained for a moment with the door in her hand, waiting, perhaps, to see how this favoured niece should be received; but Juliet did not forget her lesson; and not only walked across the large room without quickening her pace, but on reaching her aunt's footstool, kneeled down upon it, to receive a blessing with all possible decorum. She then heard the door close, and looking up, saw in the smile that succeeded to the solemnity of look which greeted her entrance, that no one remained to watch them. But she still continued kneeling, and fondly pressed the hand that would have raised her, between her own, while looking playfully round the room, she said,—

“Are you sure no one can see your spoiled niece?”

“Quite sure, dear Juliet.”

“Then take off your veil, and your hood, and let me see my own dear aunt again.”

Abbess indulged her; she even took a coloured scarf from the shoulders of Juliet, throwing it over her own, contrived to twist round her person, so as completely to change the appearance of her dress. Then laying her cross and rosary upon the table, she said—
“There is the Abbess now, Juliet?—Forget me totally—and let us converse together like friends. Do you think that you shall have the courage to be perfectly sincere with me?”
“Yes, I do think so.”
“Well then—tell me at once, whom you love in all the world?”
“Yourself—decidedly yourself,” answered Juliet; and she spoke the truth; though the confession, that there was one who might reach her for it, dyed her cheeks with blushes.
“I do believe you—but trust me wholly, Juliet—Is there not some youthful fancy, which has already touched your heart; and which, well if you love me, would make the cloister most repugnant to you?”

There is certainly an instinctive shyness, which renders the avowal of first love singularly difficult; for though Juliet had come with the full determination of making this very avowal, it was not without a struggle that she accomplished it. After the interval of a moment, however, she replied—

“My aunt, there is.”

“Juliet!” replied the Abbess, “I was before well disposed to give you my true friendship, and my perfect confidence; but now you have won them; they are yours by right——. And the first fruits of your acquisition shall be, the assurance that you shall never be a nun.”

No very exquisite degree of happiness can be enjoyed by mortals, unless they have previously felt some touch of sorrow. A landscape that had no shadows, could never make us conscious of the glorious brightness of sunshine; and had Juliet never suffered from believing herself doomed to the cloister, she could not have felt the fullness of joy which these words occasioned her. For a moment her aunt enjoyed in silence

monstrations of her delight: words had the share in the expression of it; but the clasped in thankfulness, the eyes first to Heaven, and then bent upon her benefactor, the smile that was seen, not on the lips but beaming over all her blushing face, plainly enough, without the aid of any language.

Abbess herself looked hardly less delighted; "Now tell me, then, this love tale,

es," replied Juliet, "I will tell it—though I give much that you could know it all, without my speaking it."

And why so? Depend upon it, I should listen to it with so much indulgence from her lips."

Indulgence! Then you know it wants indulgence? Indeed it does—but how do you know this?"

The Abbess laughed. "I believe, Juliet, that you are half afraid that I shall turn out to be better than a witch—tell me, do you not

suspect that there is something rather magical in my way of making discoveries?"

"I certainly should like to know," replied Juliet, gravely, "how you came to find out that I was not at vespers last evening."

"Be not alarmed, dearest. If it was a spirit told me, it was no evil one."

"Then you will not tell me?"

"Remember you stand pledged to put me completely in your confidence. Is it by questioning me, that you mean to do this?"

Juliet sighed. "No.—I will keep my word, and tell you every thing—but it is so silly a story—so very childish—and, I fear, so very wrong too, that I shall have need of all the indulgence you promised me."

"And you shall have it, Juliet.—Of course the youth is noble?"

The burning blush which overspread the face of her niece at this question, would have alarmed most aunts; but Geraldine d'Albano appeared to judge every thing by a standard entirely her own, and her countenance expressed neither

or indignation at this tacit avowal of all
lady would most dislike to discover on
an occasion. Juliet observed this, but
more puzzled than consoled by it.

"Do you suspect that he is not noble?" said the
abbess, after waiting in vain for an answer,
"he told you this?—or have you discovered
his plebeian air?"

The abbess's answer was now sufficiently ready.

"Plebeian! oh, no! he is, he must be, noble,
as!" and Juliet turned away her head as
she spoke, "I know neither his name—his
name—nor his kindred!"

"This certainly does not appear to be a par-
ticularly well conducted affair, my dear Juliet;
nevertheless, you need not be afraid to look
on. Go on—tell me how, and where, you
met this unknown hero."

There was certainly no anger in the accent
in which these words were spoken; yet Juliet
was so perverse as almost to wish there had
been more. "I wish, aunt, you would absolve me from

my promise," she said. "I see you think me a baby and a fool—and yet——"

"And yet?——yet what, Juliet? What have I said to vex you?"

"Nothing—yet I see so plainly——"

"Pray, my dear, are you endeavouring to try how far my power of divination will carry me? You overrate it, if you think these half sentences will ever enable me to comprehend what you have promised to tell me."

Greatly, yet, as she felt, unreasonably vexed, at the light tone, which her aunt had given to the conversation, Juliet had no heart to proceed with her little romance, and attempted to avoid it, by saying—

"I believe you already know every thing that is really important about this imprudent attachment—I show all the confidence I promised you, my dear aunt, in allowing this. That it is imprudent, my ignorance respecting its object but too clearly proves; but that it is equally sincere and lasting, I am far from desiring to conceal—believe it to be both—and

then know all that it is in my power to respecting it."

don me, dearest Juliet, if my manner added you—but you have not well understood, if you think the subject not sufficiently interesting—it is at least twice as much as you could possibly have imagined when I promised to communicate it to me. Not a single circumstance—describe the manner, the sentiments of this young man, and do not fear that I shall not be truly interested."

she still felt puzzled—but she felt also, she must go on with her story, and with as much grace she could, she thus resumed it:—I feel very certain that no partiality blinds me when I say that he——this nameless he has no churl's blood in his veins; for before any thing but surprise and almost terror in the sight of him, I was strongly impressed with the conviction, that he was a young man of rank."

"He speaks your language, Juliet?"

"Yes, he speaks it with ease and grace enough, yet not so well as to prevent one's knowing that it is not his own."

"Describe his person, Juliet?"

Juliet blushed, and fixing her eyes on the face of her aunt, she said with a smile:

"Do not think that it was the reason why I so directly felt I loved you; but, excepting that his hair is lighter, and that he is not so pale, you are very like him yourself."

"Indeed, Juliet! when did you first take that fancy into your head?"

"When you first smiled on me."

"He is like me when he smiles then?"

"Most strangely like you: the shape of the face, the nose, and more than all, the mouth. To prove to you, that it is no fancy of mine, Morgante too remarked it."

"Then if I mistake not, Juliet, he must also somewhat resemble you?"

"So said Morgante, the first day we saw him; but I thought it only a jest, till I saw you; but now I believe it may be possible."

conversation was so interesting, both aunt and niece, that it continued rambling between narration and remark, too long for us to follow them in it; the circumstances of Juliet's first meeting with her mystery shall, therefore, be related more fully.

It was about two months before the arrival of the Abbess at the castle of Albano, that she and her constant attendant, the little girl, were enjoying the flowery sweetness of a fine morning, under the shelter of the tree already mentioned. Juliet was sitting on the turf beside the little rivulet that ran at its foot, and the boy had brought her a basket full of flowers, which she was twisting in her hand. Breath, when an exclamation from Morano caused her to look up. Equally to her surprise and alarm, she saw a young man in the dress of a hunter, standing almost close to her. He was looking at her with great earnestness, and on her raising her eyes, he took off his plumed bonnet, and bowed low.

Juliet immediately arose, with the intention of returning to the castle, but the young man stopped her, by suddenly taking her hand. Though there was an air of much respect in this action, there was also much freedom in it, and the young lady said with sufficient hauteur to have satisfied even her father :

“ Let me pass, sir.”

“ Juliet d’Albano ?” said the stranger, in an accent that was half inquiry, and half assertion—

“ If you know as much, sir,” said her ready page, “ I marvel that you should seek to detain her.”

“ It is because I do know so much, Lady Juliet,” resumed the young man, “ that I take this liberty. I have waited here since sun-rise, in the hope of seeing you, for they told me in the village, that it was your custom to walk here.”

The frankness of this avowal might have startled any one less primitively simple in heart, but Juliet was more struck by the grace and courtesy of his address, than by the strange

that he had approached thus near her's castle expressly to way-lay her. Surprise, or at least her alarm, seemed to have passed over, and it was very with a smile that she answered :

"I am sorry, sir, that you should have taken trouble."

A recapitulation of this adventure is not to occupy much space, we must pass stages which led by rapid and undegrees, from the apparently casual which after this day took place when she pursued her usual walk, to the granted rendezvous, in which love was listened to, and finally confirmed by vows.

The most singular feature in this intercourse was the pertinacity with which the young man refused to tell his name or country ; we all, the vehemence with which he made a proposal that she made, for his introduction of himself, as if by accident, to her father. Every mention of this threw a gloom and

reserve over his manner, which it cost Juliet some smiles to remove, and it was never repeated. For more than a month these woodland meetings continued daily; and before the end of it, Juliet was as firmly engaged to become his wife, as her own promise could make her. He owned to her that obstacles existed; that he was not his own master; that his home was a distant one; but nothing of all this had power to check either their love, or the avowal of it.

At the expiration of this month, business which could no longer be delayed, obliged the young man to repair to Germany; but their parting was rendered easy by the assurance that they should speedily meet again. Accordingly, about a fortnight afterwards the same swift light bark which conveyed him to Trieste, was again seen making for the little harbour of Torre Vecchia.

On this occasion he remained but two days, and one object of his visit seemed to be the making accurate inquiry as to the exact time at which Juliet's aunt was expected at Albano.

given with cautious exactness, from
ing that his object was most carefully
at time, when he should come for the
iew, as he told her, previous to his
his own distant land. Once arrived
persuaded both himself and her, that
he obstacles to their union which, he
existed, would long withstand the
ndeavours of the ardent love which
k to remove them.

when do you meet again?" said the
hen the tale was ended.

told me yesterday ——" Juliet
ort.

, Juliet," said the Abbess, smiling,
ay, while we were all at vespers——."

n so," said the blushing girl, struggling
r her composure, "it was then I saw
and it was then we settled to meet
day, at the same hour."

s well, my love; and if you have no
p, I will attend you to this appoint-

From the moment that Geraldine d'Albano arrived at the castle, to that in which she made this most astounding proposal, the mind of Juliet had undergone what might fairly be called a course of astonishment, but this last far exceeded all that had preceded it.

That she should have been led, by any change of feeling, voluntarily to communicate the treasured secret of her heart to the relative at whose name she had shuddered but a few short hours before, was in itself so wonderful, as almost to make her doubt the reality of the scene that was passing around her; but when she heard the high, the holy, the exemplary, the severe Abbess of Sant' Catherina's propose accompanying her to a rendezvous with her lover, under the greenwood tree, her astonishment was uncontrollable, and she exclaimed—

“ Good heaven ! what can you mean ? ”

These words, however, were no sooner uttered, than she repented of their freedom, and apologized for it on her bended knee.

“ Do not kneel to me, Juliet ;—you must

do that—it is painful to me. I freely for your hasty words; they natural; yet I must go with you this quiet, however strange my doing so to you."

she dutifully endeavoured to banish all of wonder, even from her eyes, and meekly—

"as you please, aunt."

not like that 'as you please, aunt,' at and, were there not weighty reasons contrary, I would not go with you."

as spoken in accents of such affection, that Juliet's heart immediately and again feeling all the confidence of she said—

what will he think of it? He was anxious not to be seen by my family; seem that I have betrayed him?"

with the same extraordinary smile, so to understand, and so impossible to at the Abbess replied—

“No, Juliet, he will not.”

And so the conversation ended. The dinner-bell was heard, and the ladies descended with the usual ceremonies to the hall.

CHAPTER XI.

the devout religion of mine eye
as such falsehood, then turn tears to fires.

SHAKSPEARE.

ossible, by any description, to do justice
e and disappointment of the Count on
or the second time the presence of his
He shrank from avowing, even to his
ted confessor, the deep mortification he
ved; he shut himself up alone in his
nd remained there till he could bear its
olitude no longer; then, vainly seeking
n change of place, he walked out upon
ce, his proud step changed for a fretful
The light of day seemed to affront him,
closing his eyes, he walked on, lashing

his spirit almost to madness by recapitulating his wrongs. Bearded in his own castle—threatened—trampled on—insulted. His poverty suspected—his piety converted to a crime—and his will, his just, holy, and lawful will, as to the disposal of his daughter, disputed and condemned. Must this be borne? Was no revenge within his reach? As he again and again asked himself the question, something within him seemed to answer it; but so wildly, that again and again he turned from the answer, and repeated the question. Yet still the strange and awful words, “ACCUSE HER OF HERESY,” returned upon his mind. If he pursued his walk with his eyes moodily fixed upon the ground, “ACCUSE HER OF HERESY,” seemed written upon the gravel. If he looked up and saw myriads of summer flies dancing in chequered maze before him, “ACCUSE HER OF HERESY,” was traced on the air by their wings.

“I dare not think of it,” he exclaimed aloud; “she is the glory of our house!”

At that moment a large sea-bird flitted by

head. Just as it passed him, it dipped towards the earth, and screamed. The sound, to his ear, distinctly sounded "HE-LEL," and now he no longer doubted, or, at least, never thought it proper to doubt, that he was visited by a miracle.

And excited, he re-entered the castle, proceeding directly to his chamber, he benedicted himself with holy water, and then, falling on his knees before the wooden crucifix which stood in the room, he vowed, as he kissed the image, that the command which was so miraculously conveyed to him, should be obeyed.

Very satisfactorily performed this action, he arose from his knees much comforted, and summoning a domestic, he again sent for his confessor.

The priest came to him without delay, though not unpleasantly engaged, being at that time employed in eating a slight refectory of wine and wafer bread, in the closet appropriated to the keeping such dainty stores. To

these, the pious and attentive Olive had added the remnant of a flask of wine; while she was rewarded by receiving, in return, much good advice, together with some spiritual observations concerning the demeanour of the Lady Abbess's retinue.

"I know not, Olive," said the monk, as he washed down his raisins of the sun with a draught of Rhenish, "and in good truth, I cannot understand, how so great and godly a lady can tolerate such a crew of ill-favoured and unholy fellows. Remember, Olive, if I am pitiful to your youth, and the weakness of your female nature, you must not abuse my indulgence. There are sins, pretty Olive, I could hardly give you absolution for."

Here Olive interrupted him, with an assurance that she was in no danger of committing any faults in consequence of the new arrivals, and just as he was listening, well pleased, to her promises of perfect discretion, the door of the closet opened, and a serving-man appeared with the message above-mentioned.

ner had Father Laurence entered where the Count waited for him, perceived that something extraordinary occurred. The vexed and fretful of countenance, with which he him, two hours before, to obey the of the Abbess, had entirely vanished, in place appeared a look of settled

"'s in the wind now?" said the monk, as he approached the table at which was sitting, with a step, whose meanness was in nice accordance with the state of his patron's mind.

down, Father," said the Count. The obeyed, and though pretty well accustomed to pompous nothings, uttered with gravity, the tone of voice in which he addressed almost startled him.

ave sent for you, Father Laurence," the Count, "to communicate to you an the importance of which can only be

equalled by the wonderful circumstances attending it."

He paused—and the confessor bowed his head. "Father! I have been visited by a miracle."

The monk started, with half real, half affected surprise, but said nothing; knowing that the most agreeable answer would be the look of eager, yet solemn curiosity, which he immediately assumed.

"It is even so," continued the Count, "and what are all the glories obtained by my ancestors compared to this! Theodore is the only Count d'Albano on record, holy Father, to whom this mark of Heaven's favour has been accorded."

"Then may we be certain, my son, that it is this Theodore, who has been found the most deserving of it. But proceed, my lord—if, indeed, you are permitted to reveal the miracle to mortal ears."

"Of that you shall yourself be judge. To

my spiritual guide, I must, of course,
y for counsel, on this solemn occa-

on," replied the monk, with humility,
ever found you so wise and just a
your own actions, that I should advise
his, as in all other circumstances, to
ned solely by your own will and plea-

so, Father,—not so. On this occasion,
, who must interpret the signs and
that have been shown to me—and,
God, whose servant you are, inspire
wisdom to direct me right!"

sharp-witted monk felt convinced, that
s some business in contemplation, for
ie instrument, familiarly designated a
, was required; and he was confirmed
idea, when the Count added, in that
tone of pertinacity to which he had so
n accustomed:

before I proceed, I deem it best to
you, that NOTHING can change my

opinion, as to the nature of the vision, or its purpose."

Receiving his cue from this hint, the well-disciplined Father Laurence prepared himself to hear, with patient acquiescence, whatever his illustrious penitent might chose to narrate. He drew a foot nearer to him, crossed his hands demurely on his well-rounded paunch, and assumed the air of a man about to hear of high and weighty matters.

As Count Theodore was rather lengthy in his style of narrative, we will spare the reader his account of the last interview with his sister, together with all his commentaries thereupon, and take up his narrative at the moment when the first supernatural circumstance occurred.

"I walked forth upon the terrace, Father, hoping to cool the fever which seemed to have seized upon my brain, while listening to words so awfully impious. My eyes were fixed upon the ground, and ere I had taken three steps, I saw on the walk before me, words, traced fairly

travel—I saw them, Father, as clearly as
e your rosary.”

ld you read the characters, my son?”

Father—and their purport made me
—I tremble still—but yet I must
hem:—‘Accuse the Abbess of heresy
he Pope.’ Such were the dreadful
read.”

r Laurence crossed himself.

was this all. Amazed and terrified, I
eyes from the burning characters that
to scorch them, and turned my troubled
towards the heavens.—What saw I there?
e air was full of summer insects, which,
know, dance on for ever in the sun-
seeming always to precede our steps.
insects, Father, these light summer flies,
p together in a darkening group, and
ranged themselves into the self-same
—‘Accuse her of heresy before the

ost wonderful!” ejaculated the confessor.
ow, mark the end of it.—Father, I re-

belled.—Alas! I rebelled against the word of God!"

Again Father Laurence crossed himself, on which the Count sank on his knees before him, and concluded his narrative after the manner of a confession.

"Yes, holy Father, I rebelled! My impious lips exclaimed aloud, 'I will not think of it—she is the glory of our house.'"

"Ha!" exclaimed the monk, in a voice of terror.

"I will do penance for it, holy Father—I will do penance—even unto obeying the dreadful decree!"

A sort of queer twinkle, that at this moment moved one of the monk's eye-lids, and which approached in a slight degree to a wink, might have indicated to an attentive observer, that he now began to understand the business before him—but it was not perceived by the noble penitent, who thus continued his story.

"Heaven did not leave it to my own hardened heart, Father, nor even to your sanctity to

ne, for hardly had I uttered the sacri-
ords, when a huge bird, in size and
like any ever seen before, swept down,
re my head, and, as he passed, screamed
t, in tones as terrible as those of the
n itself,—‘ HERESY ! ’ ”

he Count ceased, and quite overcome
tremendous history he had related,
ed his eyes with his hands, and
his head upon the knees of his

ood-hearted man, though he did not
it to a single syllable of the recital,
erhaps a temperate belief in the state-
what the Abbess had spoken, addressed
ent with all possible indulgence.

, my son.—You have sinned, it cannot
d; but your penance, as you have
well remarked, has been spoken by the
Heaven. My duty is, questionless, to
his, and to assist you, as best I may, in
formance of it. Rise, my son. You
ortant business before you.”

“I cannot rise, holy Father, till you have granted me absolution for the sin I have committed.—Grant me absolution, holy Father, for all the sins resting upon my conscience since my last confession—though now my mind is too much agitated to record them.”

“Some small benefaction to the church, my son, will be necessary for this. Candles must burn before the shrine of your blessed patron, St. Theodose, and six extra masses must be said.”

The Count sighed, for at that moment his purse was very low; the preparations for the reception of his illustrious sister, having drawn deeply on it. He reflected for a moment; and then taking a rosary of small gold beads from his bosom, he said—

“Lay this before the image of St. Theodose, Father. A string of ivory shall serve me, while this woeful penance is about. If Heaven give me strength to go through it, I will redeem my pledge by twice its weight of golden coin.”

Father Laurence then pronounced the abso-

and the Count arose, lightened of a heavy
g, perhaps, can give a better idea of
interest which both penitent and con-
k in the business which had engaged
an the fact that the great bell had
the hour of dinner, without either of
ing been aware of it. This was the first
ce Father Laurence had resided in the
at such an accident had happened, and
kely to be the last, for when a servant,
Juliet, entered the room, and announced
so strong an emotion of regret, repent-
ty, almost remorse, fell upon his spirit,
ought of the chilled meats, that it was
y he would ever forget it.

reaching the hall, they found the family
ed, and the Count hastened with much
o his place.

uch stiff and stately ceremony pervaded
nquets at Albano, that the increased
ty of the Count's manner upon this oc-
was hardly perceptible; yet still the

silence was more complete than usual; even Morgante held his station gravely, and seemed to feel that it was no season for mirth. Father Laurence, though he ate heartily, did it reverently, and no more words were spoken by any of the family, than were necessary to the performance of the common rites of hospitality towards the guests.

CHAPTER XII.

l'è colui, ch' ha presso 'l riprezzo
la quartana, ch' ha già l'unghia a morte,
divenn' io alle parole porte;
vergogna mi fer le sue minacci,
'nnanzi a buon signor fa servo forte.

DANTE.

At the custom of Father Laurence to
y great exertion, either mental or
r the first two or three hours after
when the Count, therefore, laid his
his arm, as he walked down the hall,
ested his attendance, the monk felt
ly disposed to excuse himself; but
wit failed him, or he was too well
the difficulty of making his escape at
ent, to attempt it; so, bending his head

with resignation, he meekly followed to the library. The chairs of this apartment were singularly comfortable, having been constructed after the directions of a certain Cardinal d'Albano, who took the pattern from those of the Pope's private library in the Vatican. In one of these chairs Father Laurence placed himself, and prepared to listen, either to a repetition of the morning's tale, or to a perennial flow of commentary on it. Nothing like it, however, followed. The little fiddling, dawdling, repetitive strain, in which the Count d'Albano usually indulged, was now changed to a tone of vehement activity, and eagerness for action.

"How is this awful business to begin, Father?"

It was thus he addressed the monk before they were both well seated.

"I will have no delay, lest the monster, sent by the just vengeance of Heaven to admonish me, should again come to scream in my ear, that most appalling of all articulate sounds, 'HERESY.'—Speak! What must be the plan of our proceedings?"

have been, so far, Heaven-directed in
ss, my son, that I would rather listen
ggestions, before I propound my own.
en, my lord—speak freely and at
atever has come into your head, re-
his terrible, but doubtless most ne-
usiness. Your talents, backed by the
even, cannot fail to direct us right. I
you to the end, before I make a single

e Count's mind was at this moment
gnant than usual, was certainly true.
e, ambition, and a burning desire to
himself by religious zeal, were all
work within him; and firmly persuaded
unusual activity he felt, was an impulse
ven, he set himself to obey the confes-
est; and was presently deep in a long-
dissertation on the abominations of the
f Sant' Catherina's, the purity of his
ives in bringing them to light, and
sity of making his holiness the Pope

speedily to understand the danger which threatened the church from within its sacred walls.

He had not pursued his discourse for more than three minutes before Father Laurence was most comfortably and profoundly asleep in the soft depth of his huge arm chair; but it was long ere the Count was aware of it.

Carried on by the unusual energy of his feelings, he talked, and talked on, nothing doubting the attention of the monk, whose closed eyes and perfect stillness he interpreted as signs of earnest listening. At length the unfortunate confessor gave a most violent snort, followed by the indescribable cadence which announces hearty snoring.

“ Good Heaven!—Is it possible?—Asleep! My confessor asleep at this, the most important moment of my life?—Awake, Sir Priest! awake!” shouted the enraged nobleman, seizing him by the arm, and shaking him violently—
“ Awake! for the last time beneath my roof.”

The thundering tone of voice, aided by as

ipe as the delicate arm of his patron effectually roused the sleeping man ; upon his feet, and for a moment ly upon his assailant ; but the repeti- word "asleep !" in an accent of the l anger, at once explained the assault, same instant showed him the peril in ood.

nius of his calling befriended him. in his turn upon the Count, and a off, at the full length of his muscular claimed—

!—Sleep !—Call you that sleep ? has been upon me, my dear son.— recover myself—our forward path is I must meditate awhile."

r yielding belief to a statement so to all his own notions, the Count with the most penitent humility, the felt for his sacrilegious mistake.

atters not, my son, it is forgiven ; matters now, but the arresting the which are driving through my brain.

me retire, my son, I have no more to say.

With awe the most reverential, the most profound, the Count opened for the holy man to pass, and was when a slight bend of the head, as showed that he did not consider him beneath his notice.

When he had proceeded a few steps, the monk turned round, still, beckoned the Count, who crossed the door, to approach him. He did so, and stepped forward.

“Dispatch a courier instantly to the Count. He shall bear a letter from me to the Count Dominic, beseeching his immediate presence here; he will officiate at vespers! and remain here for some hours alone.”

g service is ended. After we have next must follow shall be made known

waiting for a reply, he turned again, and his progress towards his own

mands were obeyed with the utmost le, and the messenger was announced before Father Laurence had finished

t, the good Father, though well satisfied the success of the expedient by which he only escaped the peril into which his rap had thrown him, but turned it into of glory, honour, and authority, was, ess, considerably puzzled by the position in which he stood.

perfectly clear that the Abbess of Sant's could never atone to him for the loss tron's favour, including, as it must, that oft tranquillity of his functions in the ven if she had testified the utmost ad- of his sanctity. It was, therefore,

quite impossible that a man of his goodness of heart could doubt for a moment whose side he should espouse in the strife which seemed arising between them. Yet still his path was far from straight. Not one syllable, as we have said, did he credit of the wonderful story related by the Count. Romish priests have, perhaps, in all ages of the Church, been less liable to superstition than other men.

Those who are behind the scenes can hardly deem the machinery miraculous ; but from whatever cause, the fact is certain, that Father Laurence was as little likely to believe such a statement, as Voltaire himself would have been somewhat more than a century later. It was not, therefore, from any doubts or misgivings as to the truth or falsehood of the accusation to be laid against the exalted lady, that he felt embarrassed ; but solely from the difficulty of proceeding without, on one side, running the risk of offending his invaluable patron, or of getting himself entangled in an absurd accusation on the other.

tion of the Abbess was much of the
re and complexion as that generally
by the clergy of the Romish Church
each other. They all know, that
very one of the body must, of ne-
ction innumerable lies; and though
s in every other characteristic may
rous as the individuals who compose
s ground-work gives a tincture to
al feelings, which, spite of a pretty
rit de corps, has but little of that
onfidence, which forms a strong bond
mong the clergy of the Reformed
But this is quite compatible with ad-
r superior learning, esteem for indi-
d conduct, and affection for amiable

ngly, Father Laurence really did feel,
perfectly ready to express, much admi-
the high character accorded to the
Sant' Catherina's by the public voice;
rtheless, he doubted not that some
cheme of her own, lay beneath the

schemes, he could have
equally so, that whatever benefitted
was very likely to benefit himself al
sufficiently strong desire to circumv
and assist the other. All this was cl
and ran through his brain, along some
ticularly connected with self-love, a
lightning along a wire conductor. I
he to act? If he did not believe
miracles, he did most stedfastly
power, and the bare idea of doing
which might direct its hostility aga
gave him an ague fit. The uncert
still between his fingers, having hit
no characters of more definite m
"To the worthy and well-belove
minic, greeting," when a knock

was, on this important day, actively
ch to befriend him, for it suddenly
him, that having once put Father
possession of the Count's confidence,
e by no means difficult to withdraw
ntly from all responsibility in the
This bright idea at once decided his
duct, and with a ready pen, he re-
e immediate presence of his holy
t without giving any particular reason
g his company.

g summer afternoon was wearing
the hour for the vesper service
at Father Dominic did not appear.
nt who had been sent for him was
and on being questioned by Father
stated, that the porter, who was an old
ce, had detained him for a few brief
during which he had seen the Father
ide forward.

passed the porter's lodge," continued
"he desired me to refresh myself,
him. And that, please your holiness,

I did, before one could tell twenty; but I have never set eyes upon his reverence since, though his mule seemed inclined for nothing beyond a gentle amble, and I have galloped all the way, as if, saving your holy presence, the devil was behind me."

There was no time for further question: the bell of the chapel had ceased, and the priest thus disappointed of a substitute, hastily prepared to perform the evening service himself. As he took his place before the altar, he raised his eyes to the gallery, where he presumed the Abbess and her nuns to be placed. The curtains were closely drawn, and the service commenced.

CHAPTER XIII.

te femme m'a fait donner avis de tout.

BEAUMARCHAIS.

ad been permitted to approach Lady
since the hour of dinner. She had
the attendance of her nuns, saying, as
sed them, that she should perform her
evotions in her oratory; having an-
his, she farther informed them, that
to proceed as usual, under the guid-
ady Juliet's page, to the gallery of the

ate listened with inexpressible asto-
to Juliet, when she bade him, as soon
ould have performed this duty to the

nuns, to repair to the apartment of her aunt, and conduct her to the postern door of the garden, where she herself should be in waiting to join them.

"And for the love of God, lady, whither shall you lead her?"

"To the chestnut tree," answered Juliet, smiling.

The boy, on hearing this reply, stood silently before her, with a look of such terrified surprise, that his young mistress laughed outright.

"Oh!—I understand you now, lady—what an ass was I, to believe you in earnest!"

"But I am in earnest, Morgante—and you must be in earnest too, dear boy, and watch carefully—oh! most carefully that no one may surprise us."

The extreme quickness of Morgante, which on ordinary occasions, enabled him to understand the orders he received before they were well uttered, now only served to confound him more completely. A thousand strange thoughts chased each other rapidly through his head;

ple fact that Juliet intended to introduce a green and silver hunter to the Abbess Catherine's, was still at an immeasurable distance from his comprehension.

Gifts, however, were precious; Olive entered the room before the important business was arranged; therefore, taking the young man by the hand, Juliet, in that strange as it appeared, she had promised on that evening to lead her to the chestnut tree.

"the young gentleman, lady?"

"Come to meet him there, Morgante."

"*Per di dio!*—Does the Abbess know where he is to find there?"

"She knows every thing."

"the name of all the saints, who told

me, Morgante. Do not stare so wildly, as you thought I had lost my senses. It is now that I have found them. Trust me, my friend is my best and wisest friend."

"I have read story books and romances, many

a one," answered the boy, "but never yet did I hear of any thing so wonderful, as a young lady taking a holy abbess of the church, to a private meeting with her lover, under the greenwood tree !"

"Nevertheless, be very sure, that it is true, Morgante. Fail me not now, dear boy, now, that I am doing right—you have served me faithfully in a worse cause."

"Nay, lady, you will say presently, that I did it for the love of evil, and not for love of you.—No, dear mistress, I will not fail you, now—nor ever. May the holy virgin and all the company of saints protect you, but I think you are doing what never lady did before."

"Fear nothing from my aunt——Hark ! that is Olive's steps.—Be punctual at the door, two minutes after the service has began."

This was said in a whisper, but the wonted quick glance, which had so often answered her, did so now, and she had the comfort of perceiving that, however unintelligible her motives might be, the boy understood her will, and would obey it.

nd of the chapel bell reached them
ent. Olive started off, and Juliet
listening to it as earnestly as if
e could tell her, how her nameless
d receive the visitor she was about to
as soon as its sound should cease.

diety upon this point was becoming
reat—but it was too late for such
ither to benefit or injure her. The
d, and a few minutes afterwards, the
doors, and the hurrying of steps along
es, ceased too;—every one was in the
cepting the strangely assorted trio
to meet at the garden gate.

et stepped out upon the terrace, she
bbess and Morgante already at the

She had hoped that her aunt would
ted the same equivocal style of dress,
had worn in the morning; but on the
she was now fully equipped as the
'Sant' Catherina's.

what will he think of me!" mentally
Juliet, as she contemplated the stately

imposing manner she assumed towards her brother; and as it was certain that in these, her schemes, he could have no share, while it was equally so, that whatever benefitted his patron, was very likely to benefit himself also, he felt a sufficiently strong desire to circumvent the one and assist the other. All this was clear enough, and ran through his brain, along some nerve particularly connected with self-love, as rapidly as lightning along a wire conductor. But how was he to act? If he did not believe in Romish miracles, he did most stedfastly in Romish power, and the bare idea of doing any thing which might direct its hostility against himself, gave him an ague fit. The uncertain pen was still between his fingers, having hitherto traced no characters of more definite meaning than "To the worthy and well-beloved Fra' Dominic, greeting," when a knock at the door of his room was followed by the announcement, that the courier was ready, and only waited for his orders.

It should seem that the good genius of Father

nd of the chapel bell reached them
ent. Olive started off, and Juliet
listening to it as earnestly as if
e could tell her, how her nameless
d receive the visitor she was about to
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l, and a few minutes afterwards, the
doors, and the hurrying of steps along
s, ceased too:—every one was in the
cepting the strangely assorted trio
o meet at the garden gate.

t stepped out upon the terrace, she
obess and Morgante already at the
She had hoped that her aunt would
ed the same equivocal style of dress,
had worn in the morning; but on the
he was now fully equipped as the
Sant' Catherina's.

what will he think of me!" mentally
Juliet, as she contemplated the stately

figure, which looked so little fitted for the scene she was to visit. But another moment brought her to the side of her aunt, and the tranquil smile with which she met her, seeming to threaten so little, and to promise so much, reassured her. The narrow path obliged them to walk singly, and by the time they had followed it half way up the opposite bank of the ravine, the terrors of Juliet returned so strongly that she stopped, and turning round to her aunt, who was immediately behind her, said :—" Will you forgive me, if I own that I am frightened at what I am doing? Let me run on, and see him for one moment, before you appear."

" As you will, dear child—I will remain under the shelter of the trees, till you return."

Juliet waited for no further parley, but hastening her steps, soon climbed the bank, passed through the little wood on its summit; and at the distance of fifty yards, saw the friend she expected, approaching to meet her.

In a few words, spoken as distinctly as her agitation would permit, she endeavoured to pre-

or the unexpected meeting which

But Juliet seemed doomed to
calculations, conjectures, and expect-
edly unfounded. The youth's only

es she not come with you?"

ood this is of you!" said the inno-

—"Then you do not dislike to see
nt of mine?"

dislike nothing, that you wish, sweet

"I wished you to see my father."

ghing eyes that were fixed upon her
diately fell.

is—Where is your aunt, Juliet?"

or girl felt that many who would shun
g her father, might wish to see her
t still she could not understand it—
ld her stranger friend know of either?
no time, however, for disentangling so
knot, so after one glance of ineffectual
she turned silently away.

moments brought her again to the

wood, on entering which, she found the Abbess seated on a fallen tree, and the page standing at a respectful distance apart.

“ Well, Juliet—has he consented to admit my approach ?”

This was said with one of those smiles, which, though she loved to see them, Juliet could not half understand.

“ Permit ! aunt :—it was not to ask his permission that I went.”

“ Did he appear to dislike my visit ?”

“ Quite the contrary.”

“ That looks well, Juliet.—Now then, let us join him.”

They set forward together ; the little hand of Juliet pressing the arm of her companion, with an agitation she could not overcome. There was mystery in the meeting, that made her tremble ; and there was sorrow, that almost choked her :—for when should they meet again ?

Half way between the covert and the tree, where Juliet left him, they saw the young man, coming to meet them. The Abbess stopped

to look at him. He stepped eagerly
and in another moment bent his knee
kissing the hand she extended to
in air of the deepest respect.

still held her right hand, and with
ed upon her face, continued to kneel
she placed her left upon his shoulder,
g forward, kissed his forehead.

the kiss of peace, dear—son.
universal Father bless ye both, my

ing man rose; the Abbess took his
they all proceeded together towards
at, which Juliet had so often occupied
lover. The hearts of all were full,
r of them spoke.

th the Abbess said,—

,—it is vain to attempt concealing
that I have much to say to this young
sh I would wish to say to him alone.
u are with us, my love, I cannot hope
n from him the undivided attention
at I have to say requires and deserves.

When must you sail?" she continued, addressing the youth.

"To-morrow, madam."

As he said this, his eye glanced towards Juliet, with an expression of doubt and sadness.

"She shall bid you farewell, Hubert—Let me call you, Hubert, sir.—I know not how to converse, without addressing my companion by some name. Let it be—Hubert—then."

The young man coloured highly, but bowed in acquiescence.

"Well then, Hubert, to-morrow morning at sun-rise, your—at sun-rise to-morrow, Juliet shall be here to bid you farewell. Nay—do not both look so miserable—I trust you shall meet again, when that painful word shall no longer be necessary. Now go, dear Juliet. Return to the castle with Morgante. Announce that I shall not sup in the hall, But I will see you again, my love, before I sleep."

It would be difficult to describe the effect of the unexpected scene she had witnessed upon Juliet, or to say whether she were more vexed or

pleased.—It was very clear that she had no longer reason to fear any opposition on the part of her aunt; it was equally so, that—Hubert—as he was to be called, however much he had wished to avoid an introduction to her father, felt very differently disposed towards her aunt. She was thankful that it was so—very thankful.—But why this mystery? must it not be of *her* they had to speak? Why might she not listen to it? Occupied by these thoughts, she pursued her homeward path in silence, though her little companion, with his wonted freedom, kept close to her.

The poor child equally mortified and puzzled by the want of confidence which appeared to have succeeded the affectionate freedom with which he used to be treated, followed his mistress to the door of the garden, without having once attempted to break the unusual silence by a single word. Juliet's heart smote her when, as she turned to close it, she saw the change which her manner had produced on his usually merry countenance—his eyes were full of tears.

but now I can tell you nothing.
nothing."

This little explanation, how sufficient to cheer the heart and boy, as well as to unchain his Juliet enjoined silence, as they building, by pointing to the of the chapel, he ceased not to po expression of his astonishment at t just witnessed. He followed to room, where she dismissed him, to watch for the return of her a diately to inform her of it.

Supper was, as usual, served i diately after vespers. The Ab her place; but what was much dinary, Father Laurence was n

As soon as the welcome signal that it was over was given, Juliet returned to her room, and remained there, in solitude and darkness, for more than an hour. Morgante did not bring the tidings of her aunt's return, which she was so anxiously waiting for, and Olive appeared totally to have forgotten her. This excellent person was, however, employed exactly according to her mistress's wishes and commands; which were to do every thing in her power for the pleasure and accommodation of the nuns. She had, in fact, been walking with them, talking with them, and fidgetting about with them, all the day, excepting during the time that she had found it essential to the comfort of some of the male guests, that she should superintend their well-doing also, by flitting through the passages—across the kitchen—into the buttery—and out through the pantry, seen and admired by all eyes; while she employed her own in ascertaining that every thing for their entertainment was as it should be.

In truth, had it not been for Olive, this en-

As it was, however, they were pre-
They were listened to with the
attention; and no legend which
cite, proved too marvellous for the
catholic Olive. Their viands were
that light, sweet, and fanciful des-
nuns of old, and modern days, but
their spirits were refreshed by
from the choicest corner of the
Olive had not so long ministered to
of the family confessor, without
way thither. Besides all this,
pleasure of listening, in their
chamber-maids, of any age,
stock of that sort of lore which far
than Olive. Her entrance into
of the recluses was always hail

summoned to take leave of the Abbess for the night.

"The Mother of Jesus be praised!" exclaimed sister Beatrice, as the faithful abigail entered among them as soon as supper was ended. "Here is our dear signora Olive. God bless her! If she has not brought us the very same little comforts she did last night. Come now, sit down here, just close by me.—Sister Johanna, you are rude to push so."

"Let us have the rest of that beautiful history you began last night," said sister Clara, coaxingly. "Dear me, sister Martha, what a noise you do make with that embroidery frame—never mind the silks—they won't soil, just lying on the ground a little."

Sister Martha, with the authority of seniorship, placed herself at the little table, and the rest of the party willingly obeyed the imperative—"Sit down, sisters," which she pronounced as she did so. Olive repeated, with little variation, the hospitable cares of the night before, and while thus employed, she greatly added to the

appearance. A present miracle
ings, the greatest to a devotee
off all that mildew of torpid
their close retreat is apt to ge
duces, instead of it, the stirrin
is so necessary to the health
the human mind. Every nun
to think this, a business in
though it was Olive who broug
was the duty of her auditors to
they did so, with such a mixture
piety, as equally astonished and
secular friend.

In the midst of this delightful
converse, they were interrupted
the door. It was answered by
opening it, found one of the i

The four recluses were really good-tempered women; and nothing could show it plainer than the manner in which they endured this vexatious contre-temps. Not one of them but had given utterance to some theory, prophecy, or interpretation of the monk's disappearance, which this information completely overthrew; yet not one of them testified any ill-humour on the occasion; on the contrary, they turned their heads away from the door, upon the dismissal of the messenger, with an air of meek resignation, and when sister Beatrice said—

“Well then—let us have the end of Signora Olive's story,”—they all welcomed the proposal by drawing closer round the table, and purring forth a general—“Oh yes! do now!”

“You shall have it, ladies,” replied Olive, “to the very best of my power,—and you will only wonder the more, that any Christian priest can be found to walk or ride through such a place after night-fall.”

“'Tis possible, my dear child,” said sister Johanna, “that the monks of Santa Croce, or

your own good Father Laurence, may have placed a jar of holy water at each end of the wood—that, you know, would easily explain the escape of Father Dominic.”

Olive shook her head. “You don’t know all, sister Johanna, or you would not say that. Do you think the evil one would let a jar of holy water stand where it is well known he has got permission and power to go rampaging up and down from century to century !”

“Nay, and that is true,” observed the venerable sister Martha. — “It is not in such wild places as the woods round here, that holy water could avail; I am not sure, sister Johanna, if you have not said a sin in talking of holy water being set in such a place.”

Sister Johanna looked grave, and employed herself for two minutes in muttering something, during which she dropped four beads, from one side of her rosary to the other.

But the two minutes were not lost, for sister Clara whispered—

“Was Giovanni very handsome, signora?”

“To be sure he was, sister Clara,” replied the accurate historian,—“the most beautiful young gentleman that ever eyes looked upon.”

“What a pity!” exclaimed three holy voices at once.

“And was he never heard of?” inquired sister Johanna, eagerly, as she concluded her little act of penitence.

“That is not quite certain,” replied Olive solemnly. “Some say so—but others aver that he is still seen at intervals, now here, now there—sometimes for a moment, and sometimes long enough to make those rue, who look.”

The sign of the cross was made by all the listeners.

“And the lady that was seen with him?”—said sister Beatrice softly.

Olive put her fore-finger upon her lips, and looked at sister Martha.

“For the love of the holy virgin, tell us all you know about her, Olive,” exclaimed sister Clara. “Sister Martha is very good-natured, you need not be afraid to speak.”

Still Olive appeared to hesitate.

"Speak, my child," said the old nun; "speak what the record tells. If there be evil in it, perchance it may serve to the weak as a warning."

Thus sanctioned, Olive resumed her narrative, in a low voice, while the heads of her four hearers almost met together, in their anxiety not to lose a word.

"Then you must know, that what seemed a young lady —— was ——"

"Was! ——" squeaked one of the holy sisters,— "was what?"

"Was—neither more nor less, than the fiendish spirit of the devil, sent by him on purpose to seduce the poor young knight, whose faith was pledged to the Lady Madaline d'Albano."

"Oh—h—h!" was groaned forth by all, and again they soothed their terrors by the act that sets demons at defiance.

"And what became of the poor young lady of the castle?" inquired Clara.

"She lost her wits, immediately after the

adventure I told you of last night; and they say, she made the most unaccountable noises, and said the strangest words! But the most wonderful part of her madness was, that which I am going to tell you now. She took it into her head that the little round tower, which, when it is day-light you may see peeping up over the parapet, just at the corner over the terrace; she took it into her poor head, that this little tower was her faithless lover; and she used to walk, and walk, and walk up and down the terrace talking to it, and reproaching it for all its cruelty to her."

"Poor soul!" said sister Clara, wiping her eyes.

"How long did she go on in that sad way?" inquired sister Beatrice.

"For seven long months—growing thinner and paler all the time."

"And then she died?" sobbed sister Clara.

"You shall hear. The lord her father, when he found that she still kept on fancying the little tower was her faithless lover, and that she grew worse and worse, as she went on talking to it,

to her disorder if he could
from her eyes, and so he made
up a quantity of boards, and had
like a great screen, so that the
quite entirely hidden."

"Poor lady!" again sighed
hearted sister Clara.

"But he had much better have
continued Olive, "for what do
did? It is quite unaccountable
cleverness of such poor mad c
watched her opportunity, when
his followers were out hunting,
folks all busy, and up she went
garret in the castle, and out she
window, and round she crept
till she got close to the screen t

ment about it, which drove her to despair, for certain it is, that she threw herself off the parapet just in front of it—and when my lord came home, he found her poor young bones all smashed to pieces on the terrace.”

“Well, I never did hear such a beautiful story of true love as that!” said sister Clara:—“But do tell me, Olive,—did they give her Christian burial?”

“How can you ask such a question, sister Clara?” said the senior recluse reproachfully.

“For a certainty, she was buried in some dreadful place—probably in the draw-well of the castle—and doubtless she has never rested from that time to this.”

“I meant no harm, sister Martha,” said the gentle Clara, beginning to handle her beads.

“I believe that sister Martha is right,” resumed Olive; “it is pretty well known that she never has been quiet since, for—but perhaps I had better not tell that—it will make you feel uncomfortable.”

“No, no—go on.”

"For the love of all the saints, do not stop there!"

"Well then—if you will make me speak out, the truth is, that the Lady Madaline has never ceased to haunt the room where sister Beatrice sleeps, to this day,—they say it was the room wherein the young knight slept, when he came to woo her."

"I can't sleep in it—I won't sleep in it," said the poor nun, turning dreadfully pale:—"sister Martha, speak to the Abbess for me—I am sure she won't make me do it."

"No, no, sister Beatrice," replied Olive—"You need not speak to the Abbess at all about it; I will manage for you—you shall not sleep in the room again, if you don't like it—but I thought no ghost could ever come near nuns or monks, or any of that sort of holy people."

"Fie, sister Beatrice," said the aged Martha, "you ought to know that, as well or better than Signora Olive."

"Then will you change rooms with me to-night, sister Martha?"

“That would be the way to encourage you in your idle fears—say twenty credo’s over and above the rule, sister Beatrice, and you need fear nothing.”

Notwithstanding these consolatory admonitions, Olive perceived that sister Beatrice looked ill at ease, and she whispered in her ear, that she would herself arrange a little bed for her in a closet inside her own room.

This promise being received with thanks and benedictions, Olive hastened to deserve them, by preparing the little apartment with as much ceremony as the time would permit. In order to find some article which she thought would add either to the embellishment or comfort of the room, she had occasion to pass the door of that in which Father Laurence was holding his secret consultation with the monk Dominic. The ear of a chambermaid is generally thirsty for information of every kind. Olive was by no means an exception to this rule; and though she had treated the matter lightly in speaking to her mistress, she had her full share of curiosity

respecting the sudden business which had occasioned a despatch to be sent to Santa Croce for the grave and taciturn Father Dominic. Accordingly, with the licence which ladies of her profession in every country hold to be lawful, she applied her ear to the huge key-hole, and presently heard enough to make her very sure of being listened to with sufficient attention when next she condescended to convey her gleanings of information to her young mistress. It will be necessary, however, before reciting the words which Signora Olive found so interesting, to give some account of what had preceded them.

CHAPTER XIV.

Tell him, revenge is come to join with him,
And work confusion on his enemies.

SHAKESPEARE.

FATHER Laurence had retired from the chapel to his own study (as he called it) determined, in pursuance of the resolution he had taken, not to hold any farther communication with the Count, till he had conversed with the monk Dominic, on the subject of the miraculous visitation.

The delayed arrival of his counsellor greatly annoyed the holy father. It doomed him to the endurance of his own company, uncheered either by the conversation of the grave and punctilious priests, who had accompanied the Abbess, or by

the quiet consolation of a solitary cup of wine : for he deemed it absolutely necessary that Father Dominic should find him alone, and equally so, that no unclerical appurtenance should meet his eye. At length, his patience being completely exhausted, he rose to leave the room ; but at the moment he opened the door, in order to run away from himself, Father Dominic appeared.

“ I am thankful to see you, brother,” said the confessor of the castle, “ for I greatly feared some mischance had befallen you by the way.”

This friendly greeting was answered in a suitable manner, and the two monks seated themselves at the opposite sides of a small table, which stood in the middle of the room.

But before they enter upon the business which occasioned their meeting, it may not be amiss to give the reader a slight sketch of the new guest.

In appearance, he was lean, sallow, stiff, and repulsive; in this, as in all things, a perfect contrast to the well-fed confessor of the castle,

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The birth, parentage, and education of Father Laurence were known to every child in the neighbourhood; but no man was ever heard to tell whence Father Dominic came, what was his lineage, or his early history. In his convent he had the reputation of great and unusual learning; but how he acquired this, it would be difficult to say, as he had never given to the world any written proof of it, and it was now many years since he had been known to hold long converse with any one. He came to the convent of Santa Croce in the year 1540, in company with a monk of the name of Isidore; a man somewhat younger than himself, and known to be of obscure origin, but who was welcomed by every member of the wealthy community of Santa Croce, in consequence of his having distinguished himself throughout the whole Christian world, by having put forth some treatises of uncommon power, against the detested doctrines of Luther.

The fame he had thus acquired, not only

aware, for he had profited by it, on more occasions than one.

Father Laurence, though not considered by any of his acquaintance (except, perhaps, Olive) as one of the shining lights of the world, had yet a pretty acute faculty of discerning character.

He knew that incomprehensible theology, mystic visitations of the spirit, and the pouring out, not vials, but magnums of wrath against every person suspected, in the remotest degree, of leaning to the pestilential heresy of Luther, were the hobby-horses of his holy friend, Father Dominic, and he felt certain, that besides the convenience he anticipated to himself, he could in no way please his friend better, than by sending for him to the castle, at a time when such awful and mysterious circumstances had occurred.

Father Laurence was quite right in this supposition, even more so, indeed, than he was himself aware of.

The table at which the monks placed them-

ther's roof to commence her noviciate at Sant' Catherina's, of which convent he was, by his new office, to be visitor.

The convent of Sant' Catherina's was at only two miles' distance from Ancona, and as the Count's health was too infirm to permit his leaving home, the new abbot was her protector on the journey.

His friend, father Dominic, remained at Santa Croce, and was never known to form any intimacy afterwards, unless that might be called such, which induced him occasionally to hold friendly converse with the present confessor at the castle.

What the motive was, which led Dominic to this intercourse, it might be difficult to decide—that of Father Laurence was easy enough to divine. Father Dominic was one of the most severe disciplinarians of the community, and the appearance of a more than common familiarity of intercourse with such a man, had a very salutary influence on the reputation of our good-hearted friend. Of this he was perfectly

single line of it, was, nevertheless, perfectly prepared to speak on the subject.

“ I really think so,” he replied, returning the inquiring look of Dominic, with the open, well-pleased air of a modest man, delighted to find the opinion he had ventured to form, confirmed by high authority.

“ I really think so. The Abbot of St. Andrea has long been considered by me as the first living apostle ; and yet this performance exceeds even what I expected from him.”

This was spoken with so much unction, that Father Laurence, as he listened to the well-modulated cadence of his own voice, triumphed inwardly at the perfection of his hypocrisy. He saw not the little quiet smile, that twisted, the least in the world, the thin dry lips of Dominic.

“ But we must not,” continued Father Laurence, “ at this moment, indulge in such discussions ; I have matter of much import to communicate.”

Dominic fixed his eyes silently upon him, and he continued.

"Of course you know that the far-famed Abbess of Sant' Catherina's is here?"

The other bowed an affirmative.

Father Laurence hardly knew how to begin his marvellous history.

"You have never, brother, heard aught of this holy lady, that could in any way impugn her sanctity?—her orthodoxy?—in short, her devotion to the Catholic faith?"

The usual expression of Dominic's countenance was that of a dry, cold severity; in conversing with Father Laurence, it sometimes relaxed into a sneer; but, on the present occasion, his manner was that of a person, absorbed in some business, foreign to the moment, and it was with effort that he had appeared to listen when his companion began to speak. But the moment he heard this question, his attitude, which was rather one of meditation than of listening, suddenly betokened the most eager attention and curiosity; his half-closed eyes opened widely, and fixed themselves on the countenance of Father Laurence, who, gratified

and encouraged by the interest which he saw he had excited, by what he feared might be treated as a very silly business, added, with increased dignity of manner and solemnity of tone—

“Have you ever, brother Dominic, heard any thing like this?”

“Do not pause in your tale, to question me, brother—proceed—and, as you value your salvation, hide nothing that has come to your knowledge.”

“It was for the especial purpose of telling you every thing, my reverend brother, that I sent for you—having done so, must be a sufficient guarantee that I can wish to conceal nothing.”

“You say well—you have done your duty. Shrink not from the fullest avowal of all you know, of all you suspect—and your faithful courage shall be heard of, where it shall win you honour in this life—and eternal glory in the life to come.”

As Dominic uttered these words, he rose from his chair, and grasped the arm of his com-

panion with such energy, that the startled Father Laurence began to fear he was unwittingly engaging in a matter of greater importance than he had any inclination to meddle with. But it was too late to recede.

Dominic drew forth his tablets. This of itself is an appalling ceremony to a good-hearted man, who is about to talk of heresy; and Father Laurence took a moment to consider, with how little it might be possible to satisfy the ravening zeal of his orthodox brother; but Dominic seemed to read his purpose; for, with an accent of severity that made him tremble, and at once turned all his good-heartedness inwards, he said—

“This business, holy brother, is, perhaps, of higher importance than you are aware. It is impossible—and perfectly needless, to inform you of all the circumstances which make it so. It will be sufficient for you to know, that the church has already fixed an eye of suspicion on this specious woman—and if there be a crime at this day, that the holy office would visit more

severely than all others—it is that of concealing, or softening, in the very least degree, any circumstances known concerning her.”

This was sufficient;—and without further scruple Father Laurence proceeded.

“ You have, probably, never heard, brother, that it was the intention of my pious, and truly catholic patron, to devote his only daughter, the Lady Juliet d’Albano, to the cloister?”

“ I think I have heard such an intention hinted at.”

“ He had determined, by my advice, not to announce this intention to the young lady till the arrival of her aunt, the Abbess of Sant’ Catherina’s, in whose convent she was to take the veil.”

“ And wherefore this concealment, brother?”

“ To prevent the opposition, and struggle, which so often take place, when a poor, weak, worldly, young girl is first informed, that she is intended for the cloister.”

Father Dominic knit his brows.

“ Such timid shrinking from the truth argues

but poor preparation, on the part of your young penitent, brother."

"I have done my duty by her, brother Dominic, but I will not deny that she is a stiff-necked girl—and no great wonder. Her maternal grandmother—but, doubtless, you know that dreadful story.—My noble patron has laboured too unremittingly to atone for the sin of his father, for any one to be ignorant of its having been committed."

A dark and frightful expression gleamed from the eyes of Dominic.

"Speak not of that—tell me of her daughter—of this Abbess."

"It is, indeed, of her that I would speak. When the Count announced to her his intention respecting the dedication of his daughter, instead of receiving it, as he naturally expected she would, with joy and gladness, my Lady Abbess lectured him upon the cruelty of his intention—she even wept, as she spoke of the manifold privations of the cloister!"

"But you heard her not?" suddenly inter-

rupted Dominic.—“There was no witness to her brother?”

“None, holy brother, as to this; but he would not be reluctant to state it.”

“What! against this glory of his house? This proud woman, whose name he has made to ring in our ears, as if she were the only Catholic Abbess in the land—he witness against her?—Never!”

“Be patient, brother Dominic, till you have heard what I have further to tell—perchance you may change your mind. The Count remonstrated like a pious nobleman, and of whose confessor ——”

“Enough of that, brother.—What said the Count?”

“He said, brother Dominic, that he understood not, how a Catholic Abbess could hold such doctrine—on which she burst upon him like one possessed, drove the good Count from her presence, as if he had been her slave; and then—refused to see me—refused to speak to me—refused to speak to me, brother Dominic.”

"And is this all?"

"It is but the preface, brother. My patron left her astonished—horror-struck—confounded. And during the agony of mind which followed, he thinks—that is, it has been borne in upon his mind, that a miraculous voice uttered in his ear,—‘*Accuse her of heresy.*’”

"Will he obey it?" inquired the Monk Dominic, with a degree of eagerness that hardly left him breath for the question. "Say, does he mean to do so?"

"In that," replied Father Laurence, with an air of much dignity, "in that, he will be altogether guided by me."

Some phrase of violence seemed bursting from the lips of Dominic, but he instantly checked it, and said, with even more than his usual quietness of manner, and laying his hand gently on the sleeve of Father Laurence—

"Brother—there is an awful responsibility attached to the advice you may give at this crisis—and any falling away in zeal might be visited upon you, in a manner, the bare idea of

which makes me tremble for you, my old and valued friend."

Father Laurence turned pale.

"What is the advice you have given?"

The confessor hastened to declare that it was the fervent zeal which he felt ever burning at his heart, that had induced him to seek the assistance of his enlightened friend—

"Is it not said," he continued, "that in the multitude of counsellors there is wisdom, brother?—Truly, it is an awful crisis? *Kyrie eleïson!*"

While Father Laurence crossed himself, and cast his eyes to heaven, Dominic rose from his chair, and paced the apartment. His companion rose too, and waited in some anxiety for what was to follow.

"Brother Laurence," said Dominic, stopping suddenly, and taking his arm, "you are a good and pious Catholic—and, as I have said, your name shall be heard where honour follows good report—but there is in this business something, which, as it seems to me, requires the interfer-

ence of those who can have no feelings, either of partiality, affection, or dislike, for any of the parties concerned. The responsibility will be heavy, fearfully heavy. You know not, you cannot guess, what this involves. I have reason for thinking, that I could interfere in it, with less danger than you could.—Shall I see the Count?"

"Assuredly, my brother—my first wish is, that he should have the benefit of your invaluable advice."

"Is it too late to see him to-night?"

"I think he will expect it—but forget not that I have told you he has been visited by a miracle.—Let us seek him together."

"Father Laurence," said Dominic solemnly, "I must see the Count alone."

"Surely, brother—except myself, none shall be present."

"Father Laurence, I must see the Count entirely alone—not even you must be with him."

"That is somewhat strange, brother—I have been his confessor these twenty years, and must I be excluded from a business such as this?"

“So it must be—or I leave the business wholly in your hands—decide for yourself. I know what I am about when I desire to see him alone—take care what you do, when you refuse it.”

Father Laurence did not love power for its own sake; he valued that, and every thing else, only in proportion as it increased his facility of obtaining his personal comforts and enjoyments. Assuming, however, a merit from his acquiescence, which in truth did not belong to it, he endeavoured to persuade his friend that to him, and him only, he could have been induced to yield a privilege so dear.—“But I can refuse to do nothing that you advise, brother Dominic. Shall I acquaint the Count of your wish to see him alone?”

“No;—lead me to him, and then leave us.”

“I will do so; but tell me one thing before we go.—Is it your intention to dissuade the Count from sending Lady Juliet to Sant’ Catherina’s?”

“I understand not your motive for the ques-

tion, brother;—assuredly I shall never give advice that might prevent any maiden from becoming a blessed spouse of Christ. There are other convents besides Sant' Catherina's."

It was exactly at the moment when Father Laurence asked this question concerning Lady Juliet, that Olive applied her ear to the key-hole. She distinctly heard both the question and answer, and perceiving that the steps of the holy men approached the door, she darted from it, and escaped unseen into a neighbouring apartment.

As soon as the two monks were fairly out of sight, Olive hastened to her mistress, and found her just returned from an interview with her aunt. Morgante had waited, according to the orders of Juliet, at the door of the Abbess's room, that he might bring her notice, as soon as she entered it, and by him she had sent a message, requesting the company of her niece. Juliet promptly obeyed, but was more curious to learn all that had passed, than bold to ask it; and her aunt, though she received her with so much quiet

cheerfulness, as to remove every fear that the impression made by her unknown friend was unfavourable, yet seemed not to have any intention of repeating the particulars of what had passed. In answer, however, rather to the anxious look of Juliet than to any questions she asked, the Abbess said, that, notwithstanding difficulty, danger, and distance must divide them for a time, she ardently desired their union, and confidently hoped to see it accomplished.

Had Juliet been reasonable, this must have contented her; and so it would, but for that troublesome inheritance, which she shared with all the female descendants of our common mother. When Eve bequeathed knowledge to man, she bequeathed curiosity to woman. Without this stimulant, our weaker minds would perhaps have found no interest in the mighty questions which occupy the intellects of our rulers, whether civil, military, political, or domestic, and the union between us would have been less perfect. So all is for the best. Nevertheless, Juliet now suffered severely from her

portion of the common blessing. It is probable that the Abbess divined all this, but some motive, stronger even than her wish to please Juliet, restrained her from being more explicit.

After pronouncing the consolatory assurance above-mentioned, she changed the subject, by relating that after she had parted from their young friend at the tree (for, fearing his being seen, she had declined his attendance on her return to the castle) he had run after her to give her an embroidered glove, which from the silks being of black and grey, he thought must belong to one of her ecclesiastical attendants—he had found it on entering the wood, close beside which they had sat; she added, that she had given it to Morgante, who might do the owner a grace by restoring it.

The Abbess then dismissed her with an injunction, not very necessary, to remember that, at break of day on the morrow, Morgante was to attend her to the chestnut tree.

When Olive entered, Lady Juliet was so earnestly occupied in endeavouring to guess

“What are you thinking of, need not look so terrified at the am come on purpose to help you that you have got into. I b matter as to who told me—that y some difficulties as to taking yo of her nuns; it is either because s don’t like it—or because you are n Now I have just found out—and l is no matter neither,—that if she some other convent must : so I r to make up your mind at once.

had rather go with this fine aunt, t mighty fond of, than be a nun an

“Are you quite sure of what yo

“I am, Signora : but let no one know that I told you.”

diction to the nuns, and Juliet found her writing, with Morgante standing beside her, as if waiting for her letter.

"May I interrupt you for a moment, my dearest aunt? I have just learnt something that I must tell you."

"Wait an instant, Juliet, and I shall have given Morgante his message. We shall then be alone."

"I fear not to speak before Morgante, and, perhaps," glancing her eye at the letter, "perhaps what I have to say may affect what you have to write."

"Speak, then, my love."

Juliet repeated the alarming communication of Olive. The Abbess reflected for a moment, and then said—

"Your waiting-woman has done us good service, Juliet. I thought that my power here was sufficient to prevent this. I must change my plan; you must, indeed, go with me to Ancona, my dear child,—I cannot leave you here. Will you consent, Juliet, to enter on

that and on every other subject,
as securely as an infant trusts to t
bears it in her arms."

CHAPTER XV.

Je suis bien sure que tous ces rouages ne marchent ainsi de concert que pour une fin commune qu'il m'est impossible d'apercevoir.

J. J. ROUSSEAU.

On the following morning, Juliet and her page repaired, at the appointed hour, to the appointed place. The lovers met—once more exchanged vows of enduring love, and parted. Had any thing occurred in this tender interview, which could assist the progress of our story, it should be narrated; but this was not the case. The young man was as silent on all that had passed the evening before, as the Abbess had been; but there was a fervour and confidence of hope in all he said respecting the future, which, for the

moment, effectually drove anxiety for the present from the memory of both. They spoke *but* of their future union, and "leaped the gulph between." Morgante, when his mistress turned to depart, presented the Abbess's packet to the young man.

Juliet, as she looked anxiously at its volume, thought that it must contain many letters. The youth showed no surprise at receiving it, but secured it carefully in his bosom. One last fond kiss was exchanged, and he was gone.

On returning to the castle Juliet immediately went to her aunt's room, and found her preparing for breakfast, which, in the hope of conciliating the Count, she determined to take in public. Accordingly, they entered the hall together. The tables were spread as usual, and the family assembled; as they came in at one door, Father Laurence, leading his pupil by the hand, and followed by the ecclesiastical officers of the Abbess, entered at another; but the Count did not appear. Lady Geraldine walked to the place assigned her, and took her seat;

the rest followed her example, with the exception of Father Laurence, who, before pronouncing the grace, said in a solemn and sorrowful voice, that his *eccellenza* the Count was prevented by indisposition from honouring the table by his presence. The grace was then said and sung, and the business of the hour proceeded.

As soon as the meal was over, the Abbess called to her the little Ferdinand, who obeyed her voice, gentle as it was, in trembling; she dismissed him on a message to his father, inquiring whether he were well enough to admit a visit from her; and bade him bring the answer to Juliet's parlour, whither she would go to wait for it. After considerable delay a servant entered, and told her that his *eccellenza* was ready to receive her.

She found him seated in his library, with no appearance of indisposition, but with an air of sullen stateliness. Father Laurence was placed near him. The monk rose as she entered the room, but the Count did not stir.

There were many reasons which, at that

moment, made Lady Geraldine desirous of conciliating her brother, or this haughty manner of receiving her might have tempted her to show that she could be haughtier still. As it was, she seated herself opposite to him, without appearing to notice his altered manner, and civilly expressed her hope, that he was not suffering from any severe indisposition.

“ I am ill at ease, Lady Geraldine. What is your pleasure with me ? ”

“ What I have to say, brother, I should prefer speaking to yourself alone.”

“ I have need that my confessor should be near me. I fear not to trust him ; nor is there, I would hope, any danger in your doing so.”

“ Be it so, then, if such be your pleasure, Theodore.—I can render what I would say in few words, and they shall be such as the Abbess of Sant’ Catherina’s might speak to the Count d’Albano before all the world. Since we last parted, I have thought much of your proposal, Theodore ; and though I should have wished that the connections and influence of my fair

young nephew might have been strengthened and increased by our Juliet's making a splendid marriage, yet, if the present interests of our house, as well as her soul's welfare, render her taking the veil desirable, I withdraw my objections to it, and will immediately permit her commencing her noviciate in my community; wherein, if I have cause to be satisfied with her conduct, she shall afterwards have the honour of receiving the veil—and that without any dower or pension whatever."

It seemed that, little as they had been together, Lady Geraldine d'Albano knew her brother well.

Never did words effect a more complete change of sentiment in a hearer, than did this speech of the Abbess. His suspicion of heresy and his miraculous visitation were alike forgotten, and effaced from his mind like an impression made on sand when the waves wash over it.

He exchanged a look with his confessor; it was not, however, a look of consultation, but of

triumph. He was again the proud brother of the far-famed Abbess of Sant' Catherina's—and what was better still, his daughter was in the highway to be a far-famed Abbess too. Mortification and rage had driven him almost to madness; and in his delirium, as he was himself ready enough to call it, he had uttered words, and conceived thoughts, for which he hoped soon to receive absolution. Being now quite ready again to laud, honour, and glorify the Abbess, to the highest pitch of earthly reverence, he thought all the mischief was over, and that every thing would proceed, as it ought to do, exactly according to his will and pleasure. With the limited view that his little mind permitted him to take of the future, he saw no greater difficulty likely to arise from his blunder, than what might be occasioned by the necessity of sending Father Laurence to Santa Croce, to inform the monk Dominic, that he had altogether mistaken the Lady Abbess, and that every thing was just as it ought to be in that quarter.

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The Abbess rose; the business on which she had sought her brother was settled according to her wish; and, perhaps, she felt that it would be acting wisely to retire, before she had been tempted to give utterance to any of the bitter thoughts she felt rising within her.

“Forgive me, brother, if I leave you,” she said;—“To-day is the last of my stay—and I have business with my almoner.”

“Stay one moment, sister Geraldine.—Have you announced to Juliet that she is to have the honour and happiness of going with you?”

“Yes, my lord, I have——and I would recommend that nothing more be said to her on the subject at present. She is very young, and, as yet, not well prepared; but I feel no doubt that her conduct, in future, will be all I wish.”

Having said this, she quitted the room, leaving the Count and his confessor to congratulate each other on the happy termination of all their difficulties.

“I cannot spare you to-day, my good friend,” said the Count, in answer to a hint from Father

Laurence, that it would be well to lose no time in communicating to his brother Dominic the change that had taken place.

“There is not time for you to go and return before noon—and we must not be without your grace at dinner to-day; neither can you set forth after dinner, with sufficient certainty of being able to leave your friend in time to perform the vesper service. Remember, holy Father, that you must introduce a prayer for all who shall be about to travel by water.—To-morrow, Father Laurence, you shall ride to the convent, and tell these happy tidings to the good Father Dominic.—He is an excellent man, that Father Dominic. If the business had been his own, he could not have taken it more to heart.—Yes, yes, holy Father, you must go to-morrow without fail; he will be well pleased to hear this news.—Truly he was most anxious to help me.”

CHAPTER XVI.

On earth thou wert all but divine,
As thy soul shall immortally be;
And our sorrow may cease to repine,
When we know that thy God is with thee.

BYRON.

AFTER dismissing her almoner, Lady Geraldine invited her niece to walk with her. They passed through the garden, and out at the little postern door that led to the woods.

As soon as they had passed it, the Abbess said—"Do you know a walk, Juliet, on this side the stream, and almost at the very edge of it, that leads to an isolated mass of rock?"

"Yes—I have been often there."

which made these tears flow, and with too true a sympathy to wish to check them, Juliet silently turned again to the path, and walked slowly forward alone.

When she reached the solitary rock, and seated herself upon the bench of stone that had been hewn out of a projection which jutted from its side, she became for the first time aware of the air of profound solitude that this dark nook conveyed. Till now, she had only tripped past it, or about it, with that thoughtless gaiety which is too elastic in its temper for any impression of deep feeling to remain upon it. Our sensibilities must be awakened before we become conscious of their existence, and till this awakening takes place, it is rarely that any but the bright and sunny objects of nature, and such as harmonize with the light buoyant spirits of childhood, have charms for our fancy. But now, this lonely tower of dark grey rock, turning its front from the sun, the stately ilex that stretched forth its eternal foliage to meet it, and the deep stillness that seemed

stopped by meeting some familiar object, which, though unseen for twenty years, seemed to be as fresh in her memory as if left but yesterday. First it was a well-known tree, that in an instant brought back some long-lost train of thought and feeling; a little farther, a piece of rock, that checked the current of the rapid stream, making it chafe and murmur, appeared to have a voice that spoke of what was lost, but not forgotten. Just beyond it, a narrow glade of soft mossy turf, through which trickled a small tributary spring, divided the trees by a short space of sunny verdure. There she seemed spell-bound. After standing for many minutes, looking round her, she turned from the path, and walked up the little valley; but at a short distance stopped, and looking earnestly on the ground, stooped as if to seek for some herb or flower among the grass. Juliet, who followed her, stopped too, and asked what she sought for, but when Lady Geraldine attempted to answer, she perceived that she was weeping. It was not difficult to guess the thoughts

this spot, with another being wearing the same soft features, and uttering the same sweet tones as those I loved so dearly?"

"I am grateful to Heaven," said Juliet, "for giving me this dear resemblance; but how is it—may I, in this hour of promised confidence, say to you every thing that is at my heart?"

"Do you not know you may?—what is it you would ask me, Juliet?"

"How is it, that you, a holy Abbess, devoted to the catholic faith, speak thus of one whom my father deems——"

"Speak it not!" exclaimed Geraldine, while a deep flush overspread her face, "let me not hear his blasphemy from your lips!"

"Forgive me! oh, forgive me!" cried the terrified Juliet.

"There is much to be forgiven—but not to you, my poor girl. It is painful to me," continued the Abbess, "to say what must lower your father in your estimation; but it would be guilt to leave a stain on the sacred name of my

mother. They may call her heretic, Juliet,—they may blaspheme their Saviour, and say he has condemned a model of his own pure faith to eternal torments: but I tell you, that the God of heaven and of earth never formed a human being, with more of angelic, and less of mortal nature, than my dear mother: I tell you,—I, who knew her heavenly spirit, and watched her, till her last sigh restored it to her God,—I tell you, Juliet, that not all the purity, not all the sanctity, that ever sighed within a cloister, could equal hers.”

Juliet felt awe-struck, and attempted not to reply.

“Mistake not the cause of my emotion, my dear child,” resumed the Abbess; “I love you the better for the frankness and confiding courage of your question, and, in return, I will prove how deeply I can trust you.”

A strange vague suspicion, that made every nerve thrill, was creeping upon Juliet. She fixed her speaking eyes upon her aunt, who instantly understood, and answered her.

"Yes, Juliet—it is even so. I too am a protestant."

"Great God! what will become of her!" exclaimed Juliet, all the dreadful consequences of such an avowal rushing at once upon her mind. "Oh, hush! hush!" and almost frantic with terror, she laid her hand over the mouth of her aunt.

Geraldine pressed the trembling hand with her lips, but the next moment withdrew herself a short space, and said:—

"Speak, Juliet: do you hold me accursed?"

Juliet dropped on her knees before her, and looking up in her face, with an expression of the most confiding affection, murmured in a low whisper—

"Whatever you are—that would I be."

A passionate burst of tears fell upon the pale cheeks of Geraldine.

"My child!—my mother's child!" she exclaimed, pressing her fondly to her bosom, "I thank God that I have lived to know and love thee!"

Juliet fondly returned the embrace; but she was in a state of dreadful agitation. Brought up with all the terror of catholic persecution ever before her eyes, the fearful image that pressed upon her mind was—her aunt in the power of the Inquisition.

“Hush! hush!” she repeated wildly, “remember the nuns—Father Laurence—Olive.”

“Fear not for my safety, my sweet girl; for twenty years I have had to guard, from all eyes, every thought that deserved the name, every opinion upon which my soul rested for salvation;—fear not for me now.”

“Oh, you have suffered! how dreadfully you have suffered!—teach me but how I can make you happy, and I will forsake every thing, forget every thing—to do it.”

“I am happy at this moment, dearest, happier far, than I dared ever hope to be; and I shall be happier still, when I know that your mind understands my mind, as well as your heart does my heart.”

“Alas! I am bewildered—show me the way

out of this labyrinth of mist and doubt—my dear, dear aunt! I cannot fear—I can only love you,—but tell me—tell me—yet I know not what to ask.”

“Juliet, listen to me calmly, and I will leave you nothing to ask. — You are very young for such a confidence, but your fate depends upon it. When you know the whole of my situation, you will be able to judge of your own—but you cannot do so, without being made acquainted with all the circumstances which made me what I am. Have you patience to listen to a long and dismal story?”

“If to listen to every word you shall utter, as if my life hung upon each syllable, could be all you required of me, how well would you be satisfied!”

“My mother was a noble English lady, the only daughter of the Earl of Arlborough, a faithful servant to King Henry the Eighth, and one of the zealous disciples of that pure religion, which was first established in England during his reign. It was in the course of the year which succeeded

the death of Anne Boleyn, when the King's zeal for the reformed faith was so far relaxed as to offer hopes to the Holy See of recovering its influence in England, that my father visited that country, on one of the many missions from Italy. He was not only a nobleman of high rank and consideration, but distinguished by the uncommon beauty of his person, and his skill in all knightly accomplishments. He wooed and won my mother. Though both were young, both were sincere, and zealous in their different faiths—and, I believe, both hoped to have the happiness of converting the object of their love, to that which each believed the truth. On reaching her new home, my mother found that every thing about it denoted rank and power. The establishment included then, as it does now, a resident priest, who officiated in the chapel, and filled the office of family confessor. A meek and amiable man occupied the situation when my mother arrived, and though she soon found that the hope of winning my father to her faith was a vain one, she flattered herself that, at least, she

should be suffered to adhere to her own, without molestation.

"At the neighbouring convent of Santa Croce, was a monk called Isidore; he had been recently received into the society, and his arrival was welcomed as an honour, from his having greatly distinguished himself by his polemical writings.

"Strong as is the enmity between the Hugonots and Romanists now, it was, perhaps, still more violent then. The scenes acting in France had worked men's minds into frenzy, and the struggle of England with the Holy See, now so happily at rest for ever, fixed every eye. Among the champions who had stood forth in defence of the impugned doctrines of the Romish Church, this Isidore was foremost. Subtile, acute, uncompromising, and eloquent, his volumes seemed to burn their way into the hearts of men. His name was in every mouth, and even those who most detested his opinions, confessed the genius with which they were supported.

"Not a few among the reformers had directed

all the power of truth, and all the ingenuity of argument, against him; but each fresh attack seemed only a signal for his again putting forth his strength. The year before my mother's marriage, her brother, who was several years older than herself, and who, notwithstanding his nobility, possessed a degree of scholarship of which a monk might have been proud, induced by the glaring sophistry with which this Isidore had advocated some of the most objectionable tenets of his delusive faith, himself took up the pen against him; and whether it were the singularity of a warlike nobleman's entering the field of polemics, hitherto considered as belonging almost exclusively to the priesthood, or whether his treatise really had extraordinary merit, I know not; but it is certain, that the sensation produced by it was greatly beyond what any of the opponents of Isidore had hitherto occasioned. Its influence, however, on the mind of Isidore himself was far greater than on that of any other; but it was not the reasoning which touched him, it was the triumph. This he has

never forgiven—nor ever can forgive. My mother, my dear gentle mother, was his first victim; I have been his second; and could he reach you, Juliet, he would not rest till you had become his third—but there I think that I shall overmatch him.

“This monk, still smarting from defeat, took up his residence at the neighbouring convent, immediately after my father had brought home his bride.

“The family of Albano have been for ages the benefactors of Santa Croce. Their richest lands were our gift, and their cemetery our resting-place. The intercourse between the castle and the convent was of the most intimate and friendly character, and my father’s marriage was an event almost as interesting to the one establishment, as to the other. The religion of the lady was, probably, a source of regret to both; but father Isidore, it was said, pledged himself to his new superior, that this marriage should not occasion the loss either of the zeal or the liberality of the Count d’Albano.

“It was to avert this threatened mischief, that the superior of Santa Croce urged my father so strenuously to receive Father Isidore into his family, as to leave him no power to refuse. His former confessor was dismissed, and Isidore installed in his place.

“The first symptoms of his influence were perceptible in the increased severity of religious observance throughout the household. The manners of Father Isidore were highly polished, and his conversation was that of a man who, while still in the flower of his age (for Isidore was then not thirty years old), had acquired the various information and deep knowledge of advanced life.

“Nature never moulded a nobler exterior than that of Isidore Bartone. I remember him, while still in the full pride (in his case, I might call it, the full pomp) of manhood: his form was tall, majestic, and graceful; his features, of that firm and regular cast of beauty, which best endures the touch of time, and is also best calculated to conceal the workings of the spirit

within. In countenances where the traits are more mobile and easily distorted, passions leave their traces plainly marked, and an observing eye may read what feelings have oftenest passed over them, and cut the deepest. It was not thus with the visage of Bartone—those only who have watched, through years of suffering, for the deep mischief that was brooding beneath that proud and tranquil exterior, could learn to read, in its cold stillness, the doom that threatened them. To this man my father became deeply devoted. It is certain that by degrees, too gentle to excite offence, he taught his noble penitent to feel that his marriage was an act which demanded atonement; but it was several years before my mother became fully aware of this man's unlimited influence over her husband. To her his demeanor was profoundly respectful, but restrained; as if he feared to obtrude his own opinions, or wished to avoid listening to hers. Contrary as it is to the usual practice of catholics, it is certain that Isidore never made any attempt to convert my mother; and I have

thought this the strongest proof he ever gave of his true belief in the doctrines he taught. In my heart I believe, he hated her brother's blood too rancorously to become an agent in her salvation."

Juliet trembled as she listened to these fearful words, and involuntarily exclaimed—

"Dreadful!"

"Yes, Juliet, it is dreadful—and there is more behind—yes, it is dreadful—too dreadful for young ears—yet you must listen to it;—there is no other way to make you know your own position. I have deceived all others—but I will not deceive you—I hate my life of fraud—I hate the wicked craft that has taught me to unravel the tangled cheating of others—but know all, ere you judge me."

"My dearest aunt!—my own dear friend! do not so mistake me——"

"Perhaps, my sweet girl, I understand what passes in your mind better than you do yourself. You cannot listen to such a tale as mine without feeling that, whatever I might have been under

happier circumstances, I *have* been—after all my triumphant success, my high renown—nothing but a poor pliant reed, that has learnt to bend without breaking.”

This was spoken in a voice of the deepest melancholy, but the caresses of Juliet suggested another train of thought—

“If indeed there be something left here,” she resumed, laying her hand on her heart, “not spoiled by the wear of a most unhappy life, it is you, my child, who will again warm it into existence—but I must not waste these precious moments.—There was no place of public protestant worship in Italy. To this privation my mother submitted, not without grief, but without repining, for it was inevitable. She had her English Bible, and this precious possession sufficed to sustain her faith in all its purity,—it sufficed too, in spite of constantly increasing sorrow, to support her gentle spirit in the strange and unfriendly land where her lot had fallen. My brother and myself were both pleasure and comfort to her, during the first few years of our

existence, but at the age of seven Theodore was withdrawn from her care, and Isidore became his preceptor. The first tears I remember to have seen her shed, were caused by her young boy's refusing a kiss from her. Father Isidore was standing near him, and, as I well remember, led him from the room, the moment he had seen him give this slavish mark of obedience. I was but two years his senior, but I can even now recall the burst of feeling with which I rushed into my mother's arms as soon as they were gone. I was already her companion, her confidant, her friend—and—dearer than all the rest,—her disciple. When I was fourteen, an attempt was made to send me from her to some distant convent for the completion of my education. It was Father Isidore who announced this to us. I think I see him now, gently opening the door, and entering with that deep calm upon his features, which defies the most searching glance to read his heart. I was sitting close beside my mother, listening to her recitation of one of those beautiful psalms, which seem almost super-

naturally to apply to the wants and sorrows of each of us. The monk began, by—but why should I dwell on scenes so hateful—in a word, he informed us, that such was my father's intention. My mother spoke not a single word. The monk retired, and the scene that followed between us you can perhaps imagine, Juliet. She still thought her influence with my father was sufficient to avert this blow—she tried it—for the last time—and in vain. It was then she discovered the miserable state of mind to which the superstitious terrors awakened by Isidore had brought him; his spirit seemed dead within him—or only alive to the most dreadful ideas of divine wrath and eternal punishment. To avert this, was now the only object of his waning existence—and I was to be the means of propitiation. The day of my departure was fixed, and the news of it was very nearly fatal to me; continued swoonings were succeeded by fever and delirium, and for many days my life was despaired of. My unhappy father suffered so dreadfully during this interval, that the power

of Isidore over him was, for the time, suspended; and he made a vow at the foot of the altar, that if my life were spared, I should never be parted from my mother, without my own consent.

“I recovered, and for one year nothing worse occurred to us, than watching the gradual incrustation of hard, unshrinking superstition around the heart of my most wretched father. His feelings towards his wife were fearfully changed—he regarded her now with terror rather than with love.

“During the whole of this time, I was in all outward forms a catholic. The feeling that my mother’s safety depended on my discretion, gave me early prudence. Could Isidore have accused her of making me a heretic, she would have been wholly in his power. But attentive, docile, and scrupulously observant in every point of ceremony and discipline, I guarded her precious safety with unceasing care. Yet, I am persuaded that Isidore was not deceived, but he never dared to hint a suspicion, which every one about us could have brought the strongest evidence to

disprove. Soon after I had completed my fifteenth year, Isidore addressed himself to me, respecting the dreadful state of my father's mind. He spoke to me, as to a good catholic, and deplored the load of guilt that weighed upon the soul of the Count, in consequence of his heretical marriage. By degrees he insinuated, that I had the power to 'save that soul alive,'—such were his awful words. When I inquired by what means,—his answer was, 'by becoming the bride of Christ—so shall your holy union atone for his most unholy one.' I reminded him of my father's solemn vow—he answered—'he will never break it; he vowed that you should never be separated from your mother, *but by your own consent.*' Then my mother will never be forsaken, was my reply—and I left him, thinking the terror was come and gone. I have heard of a horrible invention, Juliet, by which a wretch could be destroyed, by placing him in a chamber that should gradually contract around him, till he was crushed to death. This offers the best illustration I can think of, to convey an idea of the

destiny that fell upon me. Every hour brought me nearer—not to yielding—but to misery intolerable, from resistance.

“The agonizing remorse of my father; his increasing terrors, under the assurance of eternal tortures; his two-fold despair for the deed he had done, and the vow he had made—were before me, around me, over me; brought nearer and nearer upon me, till life became a burden. My mother—my pious protestant mother, knelt to me, imploring me to be a nun—imploring me to leave her for ever. This was the only thing I could not do. I bore without a murmur the frightful penances that were inflicted on me: I supported all, with the resolution of a martyr; but I would not leave my mother.

“For three lingering years I sustained this dreadful contest. As I advanced in age, I acquired a power, that only added to my misery. I learnt to read athwart the thick and rigid mask of his calm countenance, the frightful workings of the spirit that lay crouching within the heart of Isidore. I saw his growing hatred;

I saw, as plainly as if a palpable fire burned before me, the relentless determination to conquer, which glowed within him; but it only made me breathe more deeply the fatal vow—I will never leave her.”

The eyes of Juliet were earnestly fixed upon her aunt, whose countenance had hitherto lent a most eloquent commentary to her tale; but she now became so suddenly pale, that her young niece threw her arms around her, fearing she would faint.

“No, no,” said Geraldine, drawing a long sigh, and rousing herself from the weakness, “do not fear that I should faint—it is not like me,—but listen to me, Juliet: I must now utter what has lain within my heart for twenty years, and never yet been spoken. The mind of Isidore at length admitted the conviction that I should never yield. He ceased his persecutions, and left me totally in peace. I felt that some dreadful danger threatened us from this change. The half-closed eye, the soft,

and stealing step, the lowered voice, the humble quietness, all made me tremble.

“ I told you, Juliet, that we walked together, my dearest mother and myself, to this spot. She chid me for my terrors, and bade me thank Heaven for the interval of peace allowed us. I listened, till I almost learned to hope—and here, exactly here, she pressed her lips upon my cheeks and forehead, and told me to comfort my young heart, by remembering all I had been to her.”

Tears irrepressible again streamed from the eyes of the Abbess—she sobbed aloud.

“ You will not see me thus again, my child. All this is here so fresh before me, that I forget I am no longer the fond and tender girl, to whom tears are no disgrace. We returned to the castle. She was in perfect health, Juliet.—It was the custom, when we entered from our evening walk, that we should find a glass of lemonade for her, and a bowl of milk for me, placed ready for us, on the little table in her

parlour. It was so then. She drank, Juliet, and in less than an hour—oh! much less—she was seized with dreadful pains in the chest—nothing could assuage their violence—yet in that fearful agony she remembered the husband of her youth, and prayed to see him. The monk entered in his stead, and said *he could not come*. I lay on the bed beside her, and felt the convulsive throb of sorrow, which this answer produced. It was the last—a moment after she lay dead in my arms.”

Geraldine ceased to speak, and Juliet felt that she trembled; at length, in a deep whisper that startled her companion more than the loudest tone could have done, she said:—

“She was murdered, Juliet; she was poisoned; and Isidore was her murderer! I had no proofs; nothing but my own conviction—and who would listen to it? who was there that knew him, save myself? they said she died in apoplexy: and all the world, the little world of the castle, the village, and the convent, were quite satisfied that

so it was ; but I, poor helpless creature ! I knew that she was murdered."

" My poor, poor aunt !" sobbed Juliet.

" Let us set a seal upon that horror, Juliet. I can bear all else without shrinking. We must speak of it no more. That tale is ended."

After the interval of a minute or two, the Abbess resumed with a firm and composed tone of voice :

" I need not repeat the process that was renewed to induce me to sooth my wretched father's terrors by taking the veil. I had no longer any wish to continue in my home—no longer any repugnance to being shut up for ever from the world ; and I was willing to sacrifice much for the peace of my most unhappy father ; yet these were not, in truth, the only motives that led me to take the vows. I hardly know how to make you comprehend the singular state of mind which arose within me, and which grew upon me during the last three months of my residence at Albano. Having no longer any

thing to love, my faculties seemed to concentrate themselves on a dry, philosophical study of Bartone's character. Day by day I felt I understood him better, and I learned to scorn, as much as I detested him. It was a frightful study—every feeling of youth—guileless, lovely, unsuspecting youth, was withered in my bosom; I found that I could play upon this *master mind*, as the world called it, and a strange ambition seized upon me. While he was putting a hundred little plots in action to strengthen my father's will, and to bend me to it, I suddenly proclaimed to them both, that I was willing to obey their wishes. My poor father believed that God had softened my heart, in consequence of his unceasing prayers; and it has always been a consolation to me to know, that whatever was my strange and half insane motive for entering the cloister, it soothed his last hours.

“For Isidore, his perplexity was extreme; and to watch it, repaid whatever sacrifice of lingering human feeling this step cost me. His next object was to place me where I could be

watched. For some time past he had been expecting the appointment of Abbot to the monastery of St. Andrea at Ancona. The old man who held the station was already dead, when I declared my resolution, and the news of his appointment reached his successor a few days after.

“The convent to which I was to go was instantly decided upon. It was that of Sant’ Catherina’s, at two miles’ distance from his own, and of which, by his new station, he was to be the visitor. To this arrangement I had no objection; I feared him not, and felt pleasure in the confidence of my power to defy his scrutiny. It was settled that I should travel under his escort; I took leave of my weak misguided father, and never saw him more.

“My subsequent fortune has arisen from many various causes, but all seeming to concur together to make me what I am. That hard unnatural state of mind, which came upon me after my mother’s death, gradually wore away, and my situation, though it rendered dissimula-

tion necessary for the preservation of my life, was less painful than the life I had lately led.

“Though I could have no confidential friend (for I always felt that my confidence might be fatal to the object of it) there were many who loved me. The superior was a woman respected by no one. She was of high birth and powerful connections, and this, added to the extent and unusual accommodation of the establishment, its beautiful situation on the shores of the Adriatic, and its noble revenues, brought many ladies of high rank to her community.

“The weak and capricious character of the Abbess, the irregularity of her discipline, and her abuse of the great power which the extent of our revenues placed in her hands, were, however, loudly talked of. She died when I had been eight years an inhabitant of the convent, and I was elected to replace her without opposition.

“I believe Isidore rejoiced in the appointment. I think that he considered it as impossible that I should exercise power so absolute and

extended, without betraying the nature of the principles, which, I am certain, he has never ceased to suspect were in my heart. But he was mistaken, Juliet."

There was triumph in the smile with which this was spoken, and in the tone with which she proceeded.

"He has suffered tortures, or I greatly mistake him, as my growing reputation has risen before his eyes.—I am his master.—I have out-run him in his own narrow path.—It is in vain that he passes sleepless nights and restless days in devising snares to entrap me. Where his name is mentioned once at Rome, as a champion of their tottering faith, mine is heard a hundred times as the glory of it—and he hates me—oh! how he hates me!"

The Abbess rose from the stone bench on which they were seated, and walked round a sort of buttress which concealed the stream, and also sheltered the retreat from the eyes of all who might chance to pass on the other side of it. She now stood upon its margin, and with her

arm resting upon that of Juliet, who had followed her, she remained still and silent, as if to recover from the painful exertion which she had made.

There was a truth of feeling in the untutored mind of Juliet, which enabled her to understand better than long experience could have done without it, how idle any words of comfort must be, for sorrows such as she had listened to. She pressed the dear arm that rested on hers, but spoke not a word.

Geraldine turned homewards, but for a considerable part of the way she continued silent, and when at length she spoke, it was in a voice that showed she was greatly exhausted.

"I have much more to say to you, Juliet—much that concerns yourself—but it must be in my quiet home. The remainder of this day must be devoted to ceremony. I wish it were already over, my dear child, and that I had quitted a place so pregnant with dear and bitter recollections, carrying with me all that is left to recall the good, and make me forget the evil of my days."

CHAPTER XVII.

Defer no time, delays have dangerous ends.

SHAKSPEARE.

ON entering the castle, Juliet inquired for her page; and was told that, the poor boy being grievously sick, Father Laurence had laid him down on the bed in the hope of relieving the pain in his head, which was what he chiefly complained of.

As soon as the tedious business of dinner was ended, Juliet went with Olive to visit him, and found that the poor child had cried himself to sleep.

“ Good Father Laurence is completely taken in by that boy,” said Olive, as she pointed to the pillow still wet with his tears.

"Look there, Signora—and you will see all that is the matter with him. He has been crying his eyes out, like a spoiled imp as he is, because he has found that you are going, without taking him, forsooth, to play his ape's tricks among the holy sisters of Sant' Catherina's."

"Poor fellow! Do not wake him, Olive. I fear, indeed, it will be impossible for me to take him there; yet I do believe that the little creature will almost break his heart, if he be left. I have been cruel to forget him as I have done."

Though hopeless that any arrangement could be made by which this parting might be avoided, Juliet went to her aunt, and mentioned the hopeless sorrow of her little page.

"We will take him with us," said the Abbess immediately.

This unexpected answer was almost as welcome to Juliet, as she knew it would be to the boy, and she earnestly expressed her joy and gratitude.

"You must not hope to have him always near

you, Juliet," said her aunt, laughing; "a page is not a regular part of a novice's equipment—but I think I can find the means of establishing him at no great distance—and I doubt not but he will prefer that to being left here."

Juliet undertook to answer for him, that he would be ready and willing to perform any service within the compass of his small power.

"Provided that from time to time he be permitted to get a glance at his liege lady?"

"Just so," replied Juliet, "if that can be managed, Morgante will be satisfied any where."

"Well, we must see about it. Your father will not object to his leaving the castle, I suppose?"

"Oh, no; he was never partial to the poor boy, and I think he will be pleased to get rid of him. And Olive?—what is to become of her?"

"Whatever may best please herself,—provided it does not bring her to Sant' Catharina's."

"I have no wish that she should accompany

us, believe me; her manners have been long very displeasing to me, and it will be quite a relief to lose sight and hearing of her grave and gay impertinences."

The day passed away; Juliet's preparations were completed; the little Morgante made supremely happy by learning that he was to be included in the Abbess's suite; and Olive perfectly satisfied by the permission of remaining first lady of the wardrobe at the castle. The little Ferdinand alone looked sorrowful at the mention of the approaching separation; but the promise of a voyage on the Adriatic, to visit his sister on the day she should take the veil, succeeded in consoling him.

Never did the gorgeous colouring of that beautiful sea look brighter than on the morning of Juliet's departure. The leaving, probably for ever, the paternal roof, especially when no other espousals are before us, than such as were offered to poor Juliet, must, in general, be a mournful business; but, on this occasion, it was not so. It is true, that the tender-hearted nuns shed

tears as they took leave of their friend Olive, and the priests exchanged benedictions with great solemnity; but, on the whole, the adieus were rather joyous than sorrowful. The principal personages were especially well pleased that a meeting so long delayed, and which, during a few hours, had threatened an end so hostile, was finally brought to this happy conclusion.

The holy train were again escorted, with every mark of reverence, to the water's edge; the Count waved a dignified farewell from his charger; the little Ferdinand imitated the action; the sails swelled, the prow was turned to the south, and again the Abbess of Sant' Catherina's, and her attendants, were bounding over the blue waves.

As soon as the pageant was fairly over, some strong recollections of the conversation he had held with the Monk Dominic, seemed to recur to the Count. He turned to Father Laurence, who had accompanied the procession on his mule, and said with some earnestness—

"Now, good Father,—delay no longer. Ride over at once to your convent, and tell your friend how matters stand with us. Tell him, from me, that he will do well to forget all that he heard when last at the castle.—You understand me?"

"Perfectly, my son," replied Father Laurence, arranging the housings of his beast, "and I hope I may succeed in making the matter as intelligible to my brother Dominic, as it is to me."

"Surely, good Father, you cannot suppose, that if I condescend to avow that, for a short space, and during the influence of too great warmth of temper (for the which I have already done penance), I fell into error, surely you cannot imagine that a brother of the Santa Croce would remember what I should wish him to forget?"

"I would hope not, my son. Nevertheless, you should ever keep in mind, that great as is the attachment and gratitude of all that community for every member of your house—they can none of them be expected to feel

the same faithful devotion as your humble confessor."

"Then do whatever you find necessary, my good Father—I have no reserves with you—I am not myself better acquainted with the actual state of my finances, than you are—but if a few masses to atone for my mistake—or a donation of candles for the shrine of St. Dominic, would make the matter easier—I shall be willing to abide by any engagement you may see it advisable to make."

This was exactly such a mission as Father Laurence liked to undertake; and assuring his patron both of the zeal with which it should be executed, and his entire confidence in its success, he departed.

Before noon he returned, and brought the unexpected intelligence that Father Dominic had left the convent.

CHAPTER XVIII.

De l'ambition naissent les jalousies dévorantes; et cette passion, si basse et si lâche, est pourtant le vice et le malheur des grands.

MASSILLON.

THOUGH the departure of Juliet was entirely in accordance with her own wish, there was still some mixture of melancholy in it. She was quitting the scene of all her little interests, and a tear was in her eye as she waved her last farewell to the crowd. But as she turned from it, she saw her aunt standing close beside her; that name, lately so dreaded, now seemed to contain in itself a charm against every ill, present and future. Hanging on her arm, sometimes looking in her face, and sometimes following the

direction of her eye, as it watched the receding outline of the shore, Juliet soon forgot every sensation but that of pleasure.

A favouring gale carried them rapidly and steadily along, between the deep unclouded blue of the heavens and the bright wavy mirror that reflected its beauty. The soft sea-breeze blew gaily in Juliet's face as she stood at the stern of the vessel, and she felt conscious of inhaling health and cheerfulness with every breath. Morgante, who had never been on the sea before, was in extacies, and not even his respect for the Abbess could prevent his testifying his delight by a thousand childish gambols and expressions.

The nuns, half-pleased, half-frightened, stood respectfully apart; and, in low whispers, exchanged among themselves innumerable expressions of wonder, mingled with invocations to half the saints in the calendar, every time the wind whistled in the shrouds. The monks hung listlessly over the vessel's side; and the captain declared (but without an oath), that it

was a blessing to convey such a holy freight, for the very winds blew kind and christianly.

In a word, the little voyage was perfectly favourable, and the vessel reached Ancona, almost as punctually at the hour she was looked for, as if she had been borne thither by steam.

About a mile before they reached Ancona, the towers of Sant' Catherina's became visible.

"Look there, Juliet," said the Abbess, leading her to the side of the vessel—"there is the roof that has so long been mine, and which is now, I hope, to shelter you, in peace."

Juliet looked at the dark high walls; but though their extent was magnificent, and the situation of the building, which was so close upon the sea as to form at that point its boundary, most pre-eminently beautiful, she involuntarily sighed as she looked at the stately edifice.

The Abbess smiled, and easily reading her thoughts, replied to them by adding—

"Not for ever, Juliet—not for twenty years, not for one, I hope."

Juliet returned the smile, and now acknowledged that nothing could be more noble than the outline and position of the building.

“Observe that long stone balustrade, Juliet, that stretches along above the water, nearly the whole length of the building—that encloses a terrace, which, when sheltered by the walls of the convent from the rays of the western sun, is, perhaps, as beautiful a walk as the world can furnish.”

“Are the nuns and novices permitted to use it?” inquired Juliet.

“Only by special permission, and then they must be attended either by the mother of the novices, or some other elderly sister, appointed by me.—But I have found that walk a greater comfort than you can well imagine.”

“And those low arches,” inquired Juliet, “that run the whole length beneath it—what is their purpose? How the sea dashes against their buttresses.—Are there any chambers behind them? That incessant sound would be fearfully dismal.”

The Abbess did not reply; her attention seemed occupied by reconnoitering the building, at a very short distance from which, the vessel was now passing.

"What a pity it is, dear aunt," said Juliet, "that we cannot land here at once; instead of going on to Ancona.—I do so hate the idea of this visit to St. Andrea's. If we landed here, we should escape it."

"We should, Juliet—and, though seldom resorted to, I believe such a landing would be possible. But did I yield to the temptation," she continued, in a whisper, "I should, for the first time, infringe a system which has enabled me to baffle all the toils its Abbot would have thrown around me. You know what the sight of his countenance, what the sound of his voice, must be to me—yet I have never once avoided him."

"But tell me—is it indeed necessary that I should attend you thither?" asked Juliet anxiously. "Might I not remain at an inn?"

—or on board the vessel? Let sister Martha remain with me till——”

“Juliet,” interrupted her aunt, “he would not continue for an hour, unacquainted with the fact that I have brought you with me; and your not waiting upon him, would immediately be imputed to motives that might be very injurious to me.”

“Enough! enough! dearest,”——eagerly exclaimed Juliet——“I would face him—were he something still worse than he is—forgive my cowardly shrinking.”

“I may well forgive it, Juliet, when hardly a week of my life passes, without my being assailed by the same feeling. You will conquer it as I have done, and from a nobler motive; for mine has been but self-preservation.”

A few moments more brought them before the beautiful old city of Ancona; and, for the time, all other feelings in the mind of Juliet were lost in those of admiration and wonder.

This was the first time she had ever visited a

city. Even Venice, though the neighbouring wonder of the place where she was born, was still unknown; and the busy scene burst upon her, with a degree of animation and bustle that was equally unexpected and astounding. The party she was with, however, was not particularly well calculated to show her the wonders of a city. With their hoods closely drawn over their faces, and their thick veils completely enveloping their persons, the nuns, preceded by their Abbess, hurried at once into the shelter of an inn, which stood close by the landing-place. Juliet, after standing for one short moment at the door, to look upon a scene so animated, and so new, entered after them; and Morgante, trembling half with fear and half with delight, kept fast hold of her mantle, and, contrary to all etiquette, followed the party into a large room that appeared to have been prepared for them.

A night passed on board rendered some repair of their simple, but nice toilet, necessary for the holy ladies, before they presented themselves to the Abbot of St. Andrea; and Juliet was given

to understand, not only by the words of her aunt, but by the gestures, exclamations, and grimaces of the four nuns, that the absence of her little attendant was vehemently desired. He was accordingly dismissed; but before he left the room obtained permission to attend his mistress, in his quality of page, to the monastery.

The distance from the inn to St. Andrea's was rather less than a mile; but the Abbess, her attendant nuns, and Juliet, mounted their mules, while the monks and a few of the domestics preceded them on foot. Among these was Morgante, and when Juliet arrived at the gate of the monastery, she found him standing, with an air of prodigiously increased consequence, ready to hold the bridle of her mule, while a groom assisted her to dismount.

Nothing could be more gloomy than the appearance and situation of the building; and Juliet thought, as she entered the low massive archway, that the dark soul of its Abbot was well suited with a home. The outer gate, and the

interior door were both open, and the priests who had attended the Abbess to Albano, and who all belonged to the monastery of St. Andrea, ushered them in; but no other person was to be seen. This noiseless solitude, after the busy and animated streets of Ancona, had something awful in it; yet, long as was the cold, dark, vaulted passage, through which they were led, Juliet wished it had been longer still, when they reached the door at which it terminated, for within it was Isidore Bartone. The respite of a moment followed;—it was but an ante-room. Here the confessor of the Abbess, requested her to sit down, while he announced her arrival to his superior.

Juliet looked at her aunt, but met no glance in return; the eyes of Geraldine were fixed upon the ground. In a moment the confessor returned, and the Abbess immediately rose and passed on. At the door of the inner chamber stood the Abbot, waiting to receive her: his salutation was profoundly respectful, and was returned with equal ceremony. The four re-

cluses were each honoured with a separate "Ave," but he started when he saw Juliet, who only became visible, as the nuns, behind whom she had entered moved on to seats at the other end of the apartment.

"Who is this young lady, holy mother?" said he, abruptly addressing the Abbess.

"The Lady Juliet d'Albano, my lord," she replied, "the daughter of my brother; she brings you, my lord, a written greeting from her father, who had the honour of being for a time your pupil."

Juliet presented the letter, and bent her knee as she did so. The Abbot took her hand, and placed her on a chair beside her aunt; his touch made her tremble, and the more so, perhaps, from the death-like coldness of his hand. It was evident that he was struggling with some strong emotion, of which she was the cause; for, though he spoke not, he still stood before the chair in which he had placed her, with his eyes fixed upon her; his lips trembled, and his cheek was as pale as ashes. At length he again addressed

the Abbess, with more abruptness than seemed consistent with the general dignity of his manner, and ad —

“You intend her for the cloister, holy mother?”

“It is her father’s will, my lord.”

“And, doubtless, it is yours too?”

“Assuredly; I receive near me, with pleasure, so dear a relative.”

“When will she begin her noviciate?”

“As soon as it may suit your lordship to appoint a day for the ceremony.”

“To so blessed a work there should be no delay. We will name next Monday, holy mother—I will myself give her the habit.”

Had Juliet been as much a stranger to the character of the Abbot, as she was to his person, this zealous haste might have appeared to be the effect of devotion, or of courtesy, or perhaps of both; but, as it was, she felt that he only welcomed another victim; and not all her trust in the will and power of her aunt to save her, could prevent a feeling of terror creeping over her,

as she listened to him. Nothing could have been better calculated to restore her courage than the tone of voice in which the Abbess replied—

“Your lordship will thereby confer an honour, of which her father will be deeply sensible. Think you, sister Martha, that her habit may be ready by Monday?”

“There will be many ready to aid so good a work, dear mother,” replied the nun.

“Then Monday it shall be,” said the Abbess; and in a tone of such assured cheerfulness, that Juliet felt it would be treason to her aunt, to fear any event which she could arrange in such an accent.

“How long has the young lady’s vocation been decided upon?” inquired Isidore, in a voice so gentle, as instantly to recall to Juliet the description she had so lately listened to, from her aunt.

“My brother, I believe, has long intended it, but he waited my arrival to announce it to my niece.”

"It must have been joyful news to you, holy mother."

"I am not sure, my lord, that it was so, on first hearing it. Lady Juliet is so young, that I doubted if she could herself be sure that her inclinations accorded with her father's wishes."

"Has she expressed repugnance?"

"I have found her, my lord Abbot, so docile in mind and so pure in heart, that my objections to receiving her are completely removed."

"Could you doubt this, holy mother, in a daughter of your house?"

The sneer with which this was uttered, was so ill concealed, that Geraldine, with all her command of countenance, coloured slightly, but she recovered herself in a moment, and answered with quiet dignity: "You say truly, my lord—a docile mind, and a pure heart, are what I might well expect to find in Juliet d'Albano—but my experience has taught me to believe, that some touch of sorrow is necessary before, in early youth, the mind can be brought to look upon

seclusion from the world, as the surest road to peace."

"Then I am to understand, that the young lady has either been unhappy in her home, or that she takes the veil reluctantly?"

"Neither, my lord,"—said Juliet most unexpectedly, "but I could not know my aunt, without wishing, young as I am, both to be with her, and to be like her."

"You answer freely and well, young lady," replied Isidore, "and when I say in return, that I hope your fortune may resemble hers, I anticipate for you a glorious reward for the youthful courage of your conduct, and your language."

He then rose, and opening the door of another room, which made part of the suite appropriated to his especial use, he said:—

"A small collation awaits you, ladies—will you partake it now? The air of the sea is wont to improve the appetite—I hope it is so in your case."

This speech was obeyed, with so much alacrity,

that it appeared the hospitable wish of the Abbot was likely to be gratified.

The party placed themselves at table, at the corners of which were placed dumb waiters, containing every thing supposed necessary for the repast, as none of the attendants of the establishment could appear without an infringement of their rules.

When seated at the table, Juliet was so placed as to afford her an opportunity of examining the still handsome countenance of the Abbot. He was now near seventy years of age, but his person had lost nothing of its majesty, his features none of their expression. His hair, which had been jet black, was now as remarkable for its silver whiteness; and the noble forehead, now left entirely bare, seemed to have gained in dignity, what it had lost in comeliness.

Though young in the study of physiognomy, Juliet saw, or fancied she saw, lurking in the deep-set eye, and in the corners of the still firm and well-formed mouth, decided indications of the hard and subtile nature she had heard de-

scribed; and so intently was she occupied in tracing these, that she continued her gaze unconsciously when the Abbot turned his searching glance upon herself; nor was it till his proud eye fell before the stedfast examination of hers, that she became aware of his having remarked her.

If she had disconcerted him, it was but for a moment; for he proceeded to fulfil the duties of a courteous host with grave but graceful politeness. No conversation, however, took place at table, excepting between the two superiors; and this chiefly on topics of business connected with the church.

“Have you heard further, my lord, of the question respecting the nuns of the good Jesus, at Ravenna?”

“Only thus much, holy mother, that their visitor is not considered competent to decide it; and that a convocation of as many superiors throughout the state of the church, as can be prevailed on to attend, is to be holden at Ravenna, on the tenth of next month.”

“It is not often, as your lordship knows,” re-

plied the Abbess, "that I obey these requisitions ; for I think I do more good by remaining within the walls of my own convent—but on this occasion I shall attend, for I feel much interest in the decision."

It chanced that as the Abbess said this, the eyes of Juliet were again fixed on the face of Isidore ; and she observed a smile of remarkable expression, though to her perfectly unintelligible upon his lips : but it passed in a moment, for when he raised his head from the bow, by which alone he had replied to the speech of the Abbess, all trace of it was gone.

The Abbot had laid the Count's letter on his table without reading it, but he now testified his interest in his former pupil, by inquiring for his health, and that of his son ; after expressing his satisfaction at the favourable answer, he continued :—

"The convent of the Santa Croce is ever the object of the Count's pious munificence, I hope?"

"I have every reason to believe so, my lord," replied the Abbess, "his present confessor is a brother of the community."

“They have some eminently pious men among them,—there is one in particular, the brother Dominic, who is an honour to his profession. Do you chance to know, holy mother, if my lord, your brother, be much acquainted with him?”

“I did not hear him named, my lord.”

“Then you have never seen him, holy mother?”

“Never.”

Here the conversation rested for some minutes ; but the Abbess revived it by saying :—

“A confessor of course, was with my children yesterday ; can you tell me, my lord, how it fares with the daughter who has so lately joined us ?—sister Camilla, I mean—I greatly fear her health is failing.”

Juliet was again (drawn by curiosity too powerful to resist) earnestly watching the countenance of the Abbot, and again she was struck by the effect her aunt's words produced on it. He almost started as she uttered the name of the nun ; but, after a moment, replied in his usual placid tone, that Father Simone had not mentioned the state of her health.

"I, too, thought she looked delicate," he continued,— "but she appears a pious and obedient nun. What have you found her, most holy mother, in these more important respects?"

"Every thing that I could wish, my lord," replied Geraldine, earnestly; "she is an amiable and most interesting woman, and I trust our fine sea air, and our tender care for her, will ere long restore her health."

The Abbess now rose from the table, and thanking her stately entertainer for his hospitality, signified her wish to proceed on her journey. The party re-entered the sitting-room, and the Abbot sounded a small silver bell, which stood on the table. It was immediately answered by the appearance of a monk at the door. The inquiry—

"Are the attendants of the Abbess of Sant' Catherina's in readiness?" was answered in the affirmative.

A solemn "Benedicite!" was uttered by the Abbot, and the closely veiled group departed, followed as before by Juliet.

In the ante-room she found her page; his

merry eye sought hers, as if he had much to tell; but a reproving glance sent him from her side; and as she passed with a light and joyful step through the hated gate-way, she saw him holding her mule by the rein, with all the important gravity of office. As the Abbess rode with a slow and stately pace, Morgante continued to walk by the side of his mistress; and as soon as they had turned a corner of the road, which took them completely out of sight of the convent gates, he drew from his bosom a glove, which he held up to her, saying—

“Did you ever see a glove like that before, Signora?”

Juliet stooped forward, and took the glove in her hand,—she recollected it immediately, and said—

“It is the glove my aunt found in the wood at Albano, Morgante.—Why did you not find the owner of it, as she told you to do?”

“Because the owner was not in the castle, Signora, and the Lady Abbess gave me no orders to seek for him, out of it. But you are quite mistaken, Signora; this is not the glove the Abbess gave me.”

"Then it is the fellow to it, Morgante—where did you find it?"

"Even in that holy mansion yonder that we have just quitted; I saw it lying on the window-seat of a room where the pious gentry vouchsafed us some food; I knew the reverend embroidery the instant I looked on it; and as I knew one glove was worth nothing—why, you know, Signora, I took nothing when I contrived, while peering out of the dark casement, to thrust this into my bosom."

"You were wrong to take it, boy; nevertheless," said Lady Juliet, pushing forward her mule to reach the side of her aunt; and as soon as she had overtaken her, she put the glove into her hand.

It was some time before the Abbess recollected the circumstance of having found a glove, and when she did, she was by no means able to identify its fellow.

"I cannot say that the gloves may not be alike, my dear child," said she, "for in truth I know not, as accurately as you seem to do, the colour and ornaments of the one I gave your page; but

I think you will find you are mistaken, if Morgante has still the means of comparing the two together."

"Yes, I have, holy mother," said the boy, who was still close to Juliet's side, "I have the fellow to this glove packed away safely with my best jacket; I thought it too pretty to be lost, and there was no one in the castle who would own it."

"Did you show it to the monks who accompanied me from St. Andrea's, Morgante? As you found it there, I have little doubt that it belongs to one of them."

"No, holy mother, indeed it does not; for they not only told me it did not belong to them; but added, one and all of them, that such dainty silk embroidery suited not the lowly and pious brethren of St. Andrea's."

"Then I confess," replied the Abbess, "that I am quite unable to explain the mystery; and, moreover, am ready to allow, which is what Juliet and you want me to do,—that it really is one."

The lofty and extensive walls of Sant' Catherina's were soon in sight; and as her aunt was silent, Juliet occupied herself in trying to analyze her own feelings as she approached them.

It was not easy to do so ; but, perhaps, curiosity was that which predominated.

It was not that a convent was new to her ; she had passed several years in one : but this circumstance tended rather to increase than diminish her curiosity. She knew perfectly well how an abbess ruled, and how nuns and novices obeyed ; but then it was a catholic abbess, presiding over an institution, founded on her own principles ; her aunt had declared herself a protestant. How could this be ?

Juliet knew little of controversy ; but in those days it was impossible to live either in a convent, or out of it, without hearing, almost daily, that the whole Christian world were at deadly issue upon the subject of religion.

Catholics and protestants, or rather, in the phraseology to which she was accustomed, the true church and the heretics, were waging a war together, more stedfast in hate, and more savagely cruel in tactics, than had ever before desolated the earth. Yet her noble aunt was both a faithful protestant, and a most esteemed Abbess.—Again Juliet internally exclaimed—“ How can this be ? ”

unrestrained occupation of her own time
full enjoyment of nature, to the form
unvarying, routine of a convent, the
of which was so hateful to her—she
grave, so lost in thought, and so perfect
her gay young self, that the Abbe
watched her descending from her
startled by her altered looks, and re-
almost in her arms, with an earnest
she felt unwell. The look, the voice
dine, at once produced their wonted effect
again forgot every thing, but that she was
and stepped forward, under the dark arch
not gaily, at least with the soothing comfort
of depending for protection upon the person
whom she most wished to receive it.

THE ABBESS.

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THE ABBESS,

A ROMANCE.

BY THE AUTHOR

THE "DOMESTIC MANNERS OF THE AMERICANS," &c.

*J'ai vu l'impie adoré sur la terre ;
Pareil au cedre il cachait dans les cieux
Son front audacieux ;
Il semblait à son gré gouverner le tonnerre,
Foulait aux pieds ses ennemis vaincus :
Je n'ai fait que passer—il n'était déjà plus.*
RACINE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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AVE MARIA LANE.

1833.



THE ABBESS.

CHAPTER XIX.

Quand nous avons le cœur sain, nous tirons parti de tout,
et tout se tourne en plaisirs.

J. J. ROUSSEAU.

THE Abbess and her train had scarcely left the convent of St. Andrea, when Isidore shut himself into his study, and wrote the following letter.

“From Isidore Bartone to Dominic di Pino.

“Within an hour after your departure she arrived. You profess to feel yourself under obligations to me, di Pino, and have ever shown a strong desire to acquit yourself of them.—Be satisfied—you have over-paid them a thou-

sand-fold. Had the act which saved your neck from the power of the law, been achieved by the loss of both mine eyes, still should I say—you have over-paid it. At last, I have her then. I breathe more freely as I write the words.

“Can you not fancy, my di Pino, the feelings with which I watched the smooth and polished haughtiness of this woman? That air of quiet, firmly-rooted power, which used to act upon my burning hatred, like oil upon flame, now—that I knew, it tottered to its fall, was sweet to me, as a cooling draught to the thirsty traveller. At last I have her. But this girl, this Juliet is come with her. What does this mean? Some faltering change of purpose? But it matters not—I have her too.—It is another egg of the viper that stung me. So hatefully like too! But—it shall be crushed. All that I ask, of the God whom I have served in fastings, in vigils, and in scourgings, all that I ask is life—till that accursed race have felt my strength, beyond their power to scorn it!

“I am doubly sure of her, di Pino. With skill and perseverance that might suffice to win an

empire, I have succeeded in placing Camilla d'Organio in her hands—Did I tell you the history of that girl? You have so bewildered my sober intellects by the happiness, the unaccustomed happiness you have bestowed on me, my di Pino, that in truth I know not.

“The facts are these.

“A young and noble gentleman of Rome, by name Cesario di Mondello, was chosen by the Cardinal Rivalta as the husband of his niece. You know, I believe, how near and dear this niece is to her uncle. Otavia Rivalta loved Mondello, and the cardinal announced to the young man, his happiness; but, to his unspeakable rage, it was declined.

“Otavia, who with the figure of an angel is said to have the heart of a fury, watched him, found out that he haunted the house of one Filippo d'Organio, who had a lovely daughter, and set at work; I know not how many feminine intrigues, to make this girl a nun. It is quite needless to follow these, through all their windings; it is enough to know that the car-

dinal's power and his niece's vengeance achieved their object, that Camilla d'Organio was placed in the convent of St. Urbano, at Rome—and *professed*. Professed, observe; of that there is sufficient record. Mondello was furious,—declared that she was already his wife, defied the cardinal openly, and was banished from Rome. He found the means, however, of contriving a plan of escape for Camilla, which was all but successful; she was recognised and secured in a house where she had secreted herself, at the distance of a hundred yards from her convent, three days after she had quitted it. The superior refused to receive her again; and her father, who had secured the friendship of Cardinal Rivalta by using all his power to place the girl in a cloister, obtained her pardon through his influence, with a promise that the whole business should be concealed, and admission obtained for her in some respectable convent at a distance. Rivalta sent to me, stating the facts, and desiring me to seek some place for her reception. He added, in his light way,

that if the lady proved with child, the holy sisterhood might have the nursing it. Whether this were a mere idle jest, or that he had some intimation of the truth, I know not. It was enough for me, that the thing was possible; and I determined that the blot should fall upon the immaculate community of Sant' Catherina's; certain that if it did fall, our catholic Abbess would find it difficult to act the part that would be assigned her in such a drama. Now, should she flinch, di Pino.—The girl is arrived there—Simione has confessed her, but learnt nothing from her. Strange whispers are, however, already afloat among her companions, and it is probable that the true faith may soon receive the wholesome stimulative of a *Requiescat in pace*. These things always do good; they act upon the church as bitter drugs do on the body; they purge the foul humours generated by torpid indifference, and refresh the healthful current of the blood.

“Our saintly Abbess will doubtless hear of this, from some of her well-disciplined flock, before

she sleeps this night. On Monday her precious niece is to receive from me the habit of a novice—and then—should she not, as in duty bound, and by the positive laws of conventual discipline commanded, should she not communicate the report to me—we may pretty well guess what will follow. I have her, di Pino, and I will hold her in my gripe, till she shall cease to be. Then—shall I not again have my foot upon the neck of my enemy? He still lives, that wretched heretic, whose accursed pen robbed me of the fair preferment which my zeal had won. It was within my grasp, and he tore it from me.

“Farewell, my friend! be ready with your evidence when I send for you: she shall be overwhelmed—buried a thousand fathom deep under the damning proofs of her accumulated guilt. Let none at the Santa Croce know that your short absence was other than a pilgrimage. It was a pilgrimage, di Pino, a holy pilgrimage. Should I ever reach the station it has been the object of my life to obtain——this business will

recall my name to them, di Pino. Whatever happens to me—think not that my soul's friend shall be forgotten.

“Thine in the faith of Christ,

“ISIDORE BARTONE.”

While her enemy was thus meditating her destruction, Geraldine d'Albano felt herself happier than she had been for many years, or than, only a few days before, she had ever hoped to be again. Every look, every word of Juliet, spoke the most devoted affection for her, and the hope of guarding her from sorrow, labouring for her happiness, and finally of ensuring it in the way she herself desired, filled her heart with gladness. She was now returning to duties which, though always punctually fulfilled, had often been tedious and irksome; but now she thought she should feel them so, no longer; and as she led her young niece into her home, all that had ever made it a painful one to her, seemed changed, or utterly forgotten.

The first thing that struck the young novice, was the appearance of universal pleasure at the return of the superior. It was expressed, however, by very little of outward demonstration. The Abbess passed onward to her parlour, and outside the door of this room a large party of the nuns was assembled, evidently for the satisfaction of getting a look at the Abbess as she passed. That this was really the motive, was shown by many phrases, which met her ear, as she followed.

“The saints bless her!”

“How well she looks.”

“Thank God! we have her safe again,” and the like.

Geraldine passed through them, with a look of smiling kindness, which seemed intended for all; for she distinguished none by any particular salutation. This kindness, too, was mixed with an air of dignity, which, though it did not amount to haughtiness, was, at least, equally distant from familiar intimacy. Every one, however, appeared satisfied, and never were

"golden opinions" more legible, than those which Juliet now read in the numerous eyes that were fixed upon her aunt.

As the Abbess entered the room, Juliet looked back at the crowd of nuns, to see if any of them were about to follow, but perceived that, having lost sight of their superior, all their attention was now turned to the four companions of her excursion. Each of these was immediately surrounded by a set of her particular intimates, and thus they moved off in four distinct bodies, to enjoy the mutual luxury of telling and hearing all the miniature events which had occurred since they parted. In this intercourse, however, the travellers were naturally the first speakers; they considered this as their right, and it made no trifling part of the advantage which accrued to them, from the envied distinction conferred by the expedition to Albano.

But when this first tribute to the importance of foreign wonders had been paid, the other party grew important in their turn; for they had news to tell of events within the cloister, at least

equal in interest to any that were recounted from without.

Of these we shall hear when they reach the Abbess, for we must now return to her. Having given this first glance of natural curiosity to those who were, for a time, to be her companions, Juliet followed her aunt into the parlour.

Here again she saw many indications that the return of the Abbess was welcome. Several little jars, filled with the choicest flowers, were placed in different parts of the room;—the shades of the casements were carefully arranged, and at one of them was placed a chair and footstool, with a table beside them, on which were spread figs, grapes, and mulberries, in little baskets, formed by their own freshly-gathered leaves. The apartment was cool and fragrant, and the fond welcome she received from the noble recluse, as she entered, would have made a less agreeable retreat appear delightful to Juliet.

“Kind souls!” exclaimed the Abbess, point-

ing to the pretty preparation for her arrival;—
“Flowers and fruit are furnished by our gardens, Juliet; and they are luxuries which my nuns know I prize. I doubt not,” she continued, placing a chair for Juliet beside her own, and gently pushing the frail baskets towards her,—
“I doubt not, but that every one of the community has assisted to set forth this little table, and to decorate my room; sister Agatha plaited these handles with tendrils of the vine; Philippa wove the bottoms with the young leaves of the olive; Rose and Teresa have twisted the sides together thus cleverly; and all the rest have, I will answer for it, been roaming through the gardens, since day-break, to pick the finest fruit, and to gather all this world of flowers.”

“They love you,” said Juliet;—“How easy is it to read that, in all their little labours:—and who was it arranged these flowers?—I never saw bouquets so graceful, and so much out of the common way.”

“Ah! those were placed, I am sure, by my poor Camilla. I have already learnt to know

her light, wavy, delicate bouquets from all others.

“Your poor Camilla? and who is that?”

“She is the nun who has lately joined us; you heard me inquire for her, of the Abbot; she appears ill, and unhappy; nevertheless, there is something peculiarly pleasing about her; you must cultivate her acquaintance, Juliet; I may not distinguish any one, by paying them particular attention; but you are not so restrained, and I hope you may win her friendship, and be a comfort to her; but remember this can only be through your own attention and kindness to her;—were I to present her particularly to my niece, as her future friend, I should draw down upon her more jealousy, than any affection from either of us could easily atone for.”

“I hope I may find her willing to receive me as a friend,” replied Juliet; “I, on my part, am willing to give her all the love I can spare from you.—But why *may* you not distinguish her yourself, if you think she deserves it?”

Geraldine smiled at the question.

"You have never been an abbess—nor a queen, Juliet, or you would not ask this."

"Oh, what a life for you!" exclaimed Juliet; "you have then lived without a companion, and without a friend?"

"Most surely I have, in your sense of the word," replied the Abbess, "and this has, indeed, been my only real sorrow. The world, as it is called, I never knew—and could, therefore, easily determine to forget its name—but the conversations, the readings, the reasonings, with my mother——. Every year that has passed since I lost them, has only taught me to prize them more. But do not look at me so pitifully, dearest;—I have found her again in you. You are an extraordinary girl, Juliet, considering the scanty advantages you have had—but my mother's spirit is in your eyes—and it will be strange, if in the ample leisure of this still retreat, you do not learn to feel and think as she did."

At this moment the door opened, and a veiled

head appeared at it; but it was immediately withdrawn, and the door closed.

"Surely, that was sister Agatha—run, Juliet, and recall her. She must have something more than common to communicate, or she would not come thus, without a summons."

Juliet obeyed, and presently returned with the nun, who was a pleasing-looking woman, about forty.

"You are engaged, dear mother?" she said, pausing at the door.

"Not so, but that I can receive you, my daughter," replied the Abbess. "Do you wish to speak to me, sister Agatha?"

"When you are alone, holy mother."

"Call hither the mother of the novices then, sister Agatha, and she shall lead my niece to her cell. Return with her—and I will then speak with you."

The nun left the room to obey.

"I fear I shall be a good deal occupied, for some days, Juliet, in hearing from the elder

nuns, all that has passed in my absence. This must be submitted to—though it is not probable that they have any thing more important to relate, than how many flowers sister Anne has embroidered on the altar-cloth—or how many lessons sister Marguerette has taken in singing. But if I did not listen to all this, with as much attention as the Doge hears a report from the Senate, I should soon lose my authority and my reputation.”

“Would to God you had an occupation more worthy of you,” said Juliet, embracing her.

“I shall have such now,” returned Geraldine, cheerfully. “Have I not that dear head to clear of a world of time-stained rubbish, which has been carefully laid up in it, in lieu of pure gold?—but here they come.”

The countenance of the Abbess resumed its wonted look of cold, but gentle gravity, as they entered.

An elderly nun, with a lively eye, and much bustling activity in her manner, now accompanied sister Agatha to the parlour.

"Good day, sister Marcella," said the superior, "I have brought you a new novice, in my niece. Let her have the vacant cell, at the corner where the nuns' east gallery crosses that of the novices'—the cell next sister Camilla's, I mean—I know you will be careful of her comfort."

"The cell at the corner of the novices' gallery, holy mother?—next sister Camilla's?"

The two nuns exchanged glances.

"Yes," answered the Abbess. "It is not occupied, is it?"

"No, holy mother."

"Then lead my niece to it. It looks into the garden, Juliet,—and you will see flowers, as beautiful as those you have left."

Juliet only answered by a respectful obeisance, and followed Marcella out of the room.

The young novice was, as we have said, familiar with the interior of a convent, and, therefore, felt no dismay at the gloomy arched passages, and sky-lit corridors by which she passed to the novices' gallery. When almost arrived

at the door of the little room that was destined for her, she observed a nun advancing towards them, who drew her veil close over her face as they passed.

Marcella looked after her for a moment, and then drawing close to Juliet said, almost in a whisper—

“That is sister Camilla.”

Juliet immediately turned, with much interest, to look at her—but she had passed quickly, and her tall stature was all that she could distinguish.

On entering her room, Juliet found it much more cheerful than she had expected; the casement being large, and opening upon a garden, which, though surrounded on all sides by the high prison-like walls of the convent enclosure, was still beautiful from its profusion of flowers. The whole garden appeared to be laid out in beds, intersected by broad walks; excepting where, towards the north, a lofty grove of mulberry-trees seemed to offer shade and solitude to any recluse who might wish to find them.

The good-humoured and officious mother of the

novices entered the cell with her new pupil, and pointed out to her, with much complacency, the pretty oratory, the soft pillow, the pleasant window, and the general neat appearance of the little chamber.

“Are you pleased, my dear !” said the good Marcella. “Is it prettier than you expected?”

Juliet assured her that it was.

“And when are we to take the habit? it will be the Abbot himself, I will engage, who will give it to us; ’tis not very often he does it,—but the holy mother’s own niece—oh! he can do no less. I hope nothing will happen to disappoint us; that would be a pity, my dear, wouldn’t it?”

Juliet, who was still engaged in admiring the garden, turned to give some sort of answer to this, but before she could speak, Marcella continued—

“I say, my dear, I wonder who will give us the exhortation? Fra’ Basile perhaps—or it may be Fra’ Simione—mayn’t it? Oh, we shall look well in the veil—the dress will make us ten times prettier than ever.”

These questions, exclamations, and observations, followed each other so closely, that Juliet abandoned the idea of replying to any of them. She stood with her eyes fixed on the garden, and meditating, with a degree of emotion, not quite suitable to the place she was in, on one who she thought would not well like to know that she had gone, where it would be so impossible for him to follow. As she continued to look into the garden, she recognised the same tall figure which had passed them in the gallery.

"That is sister Camilla, is it not?" said she.

"Yes, yes," answered Marcella; "there she goes, always under those dark mulberry trees. Our mother must look after her, or mischief will come of it."

"Is there any harm in her walking there, mother Marcella?"

"It is not for me to say, my dear; she is not a novice you know."

"Are not the novices allowed the range of the garden?" inquired Juliet, rather alarmed.

“The saints bless you, my dear!—yes, to be sure they are—the garden, and the flowers, and the fruit too, once a day.”

“Only once a day, mother?—may we walk out only once a day?”

“For walking, yes; but not in the fruit garden—bless you, Carina, we should not have a fig or a grape left at the end of a month, if you were all suffered to range at will, through the fruit trees—no, no, my dear, that would never do.”

“But if that is all, mother Marcella, why do you think it so wrong for sister Camilla to walk under those trees? are you afraid she should run away with all the mulberries?”

Marcella laughed heartily.

“No, no, my dear, for a certainty, that was not what I was thinking of; but zitt’, zitto, Signorina—I must not tell you quite every thing either. Shall I go and see to have your mails and boxes brought up here, my dear? you have not brought many things, I suppose?—that would only be to fill up the little room

there is, to no purpose; for we will have the novice's habit ready in no time—if that's all we wait for."

Juliet longed to get rid of her, and replied, that she should be very glad to have her luggage conveyed to her room, adding—

"Is there any objection, good mother, to my seeing my page for a few minutes?"

The old woman crossed herself, and muttered sundry ejaculations.

"Your page, child! What a boy? a boy page, my dear!—and you born and bred in a Christian country—say nothing of a catholic. Why what do you think would become of us all, with a boy let to run loose about the novices' gallery? Jesu Maria!—you are certainly distracted, my dear."

Juliet apologized for her thoughtlessness, and said she would walk down into the garden, till the Abbess should be at leisure, when she would ask to see the little boy in the parlour.

"That's all very well," replied the gossiping

Marcella.—“ Poor little fellow ! ’tis but a baby, to be sure—we will take good care of him among us, never fear—he shall live upon sugar plums.—He will have to sleep at the porter’s lodgings, as right and fitting he should—but we elder nuns have our privileges—and he must not be kept at the porter’s lodgings all day. Sister Clara says he was breaking his little heart, when you talked of leaving him behind ; and sister Beatrice tells a most beautiful story, of his being found all stark naked, at the foot of the altar, with two angels standing over him, to keep the cold wind away, with their wings—that’s just true—isn’t it, my dear ? Sure he must be meant for something out of the common way—don’t you think so ?—Why perhaps, he may live to be Pope, my dear ?—Or perhaps, he will be a martyr and a saint ? We all say, he looks as if he were born for some great fortune.”

All this was uttered, as they pursued their way to the garden. Having reached the door that led to it, Marcella took her leave, saying, that

she had at least seven thousand things to do before vespers, and it only wanted half an hour of the time.

Juliet almost ran out through the garden door, so weary was she of the gabble of her new acquaintance. On entering the large well-kept garden, she gave one glance of approbation at the beautiful flower beds, and then turned immediately towards the grove of mulberry trees, determined to lose no time in obeying the wish her aunt had expressed, that she should volunteer attention and kindness to the melancholy Camilla.

Her white dress and black veil were still visible among the trees, and Juliet contrived to overtake her, just as she reached the termination of the avenue. An introduction is not so necessary in the garden of a convent, as in the Tuileries. A gentle "Ave!" and an humble inclination of the head, is all that ceremony requires, and these being exchanged, they turned together.

"You do not know me, sister Camilla, though

I already feel as if I knew you. I am Juliet d'Albano, and my aunt has told me that she hopes I shall be happy enough to obtain your friendship."

At these words Camilla raised her head, and Juliet, for the first time, obtained a view of her face, which had been completely concealed by her over-hanging hood. Camilla had been, and at no very distant period, surpassingly handsome, but now there was not the slightest trace of beauty remaining on her face. Her complexion was faded and colourless; her eyes deep-sunk, heavy, and dull; her excessive thinness made her features appear almost frightfully large, and her tall figure was shapeless, uncouth, and awkward.

"Your aunt? are you the niece of the Abbess?" said she, in return to Juliet's address.

"Yes, dear sister, and I hope that relationship may be the means of recommending me to your favour."

"My favour!—The Abbess knows nothing about me, my poor child, or she would

not have recommended you to seek my favour."

"And why not, sister Camilla? She thinks you are ill—she fears that you are unhappy—and though her cares for all leave her but little time to devote to individuals, she is most anxious for you. Let me, then, be her deputy; and receive my offered friendship, as a proof that you possess hers."

There was something in the look and voice of Juliet not easy to resist, and Camilla silently placed her arm within that of her young companion. They walked on together for some minutes without speaking; at length Camilla said—

"Geraldine d'Albano is a noble-minded woman. The few hours we have passed together have been enough to show me this; but we meet not on equal terms—I see her as she is—she does not see me so. I am not what I seem."

Juliet knew not what to think of this avowal;

she was surprised, too, at hearing her aunt named in her own convent otherwise than as "the Abbess;" but, after a little reflection, it occurred to her, that it was possible Camilla herself was not a catholic, and therefore would not recognise a title, conferred by a power she did not acknowledge.

"Perhaps, I understand you," said Juliet, timidly. "Perhaps you consider such vows as you have made, not binding?"

"Pardon me, young lady. I have better studied a Christian's duty, than to quibble with any vow uttered in the name of God. All vows are binding. Your aunt is a vowed nun, and an anointed Abbess. When I called her by her own proper name, it was not to rob her of a title, but to give her a higher. Your aunt is Abbess of Sant' Catherina's; it is a station of great power and influence; but if I mistake not, Geraldine d'Albano is something greater still."

It was impossible that Camilla could have said

any thing which would so completely have won the heart of Juliet as these words. This was exactly what she felt herself.

"Now, at least, I understand you, dear Camilla," said she; "you need say no more to make me love you."

"You are very kind, Signora," replied poor Camilla, with a melancholy smile; "I ought to feel comfort from such an assurance; but I am too unhappy to wish that any one should love me."

To such a heart as Juliet's, this answer, instead of being repulsive, only served to make her more anxiously desire the friendship and confidence of the nun; and gently pressing the arm which still rested upon hers, she replied—

"I will not ask you to promise me your love and confidence, sister Camilla; but you cannot prevent my wishing for, or my trying to win, both."

"My confidence!—poor child!—you know not what you ask for."

"Then give it to my aunt instead—least may comfort you."

"No!—To do that, is not within the power of human power. Yet you say well, girl; and if she will listen to me—willing to tell her all."

"Dear Camilla!" replied Juliet, "do you tremble thus? Oh! if you tell her —."

The bell sounded for vespers.

"Let me enter the chapel before the crowd into it," said Camilla hastening steps. "They all stare at me—become look so wretched."

"Not so—oh! do not think it. You are still almost a stranger—but now, they will not stare at me. I assure you, I dread to go alone. Shall we enter the chapel together? or if you I must wait for the mother Marcella?"

"Go with me to the door, dear girl, and then leave me. Yes,—Marcella will come for you."

With quick and almost trembling steps, the unhappy Camilla led her companion to the chapel door, and holding her hand for a moment before she entered, uttered the words—"God bless you, dear girl!" in a tone which went to the heart of Juliet, so full was it, both of melancholy and of kindness.

CHAPTER XX.

Le babil seul, les dédommagera de toute la gêne.

ROUSSEAU.

As Juliet retreated from the door in order to seek Marcella, she met sister Clara, who, having seen her pass towards it, came good-naturedly to tell her, that the mother of the novices was surprised, because she was not to be found either in her cell or in the garden.

“Where is she, sister Clara?” said Juliet, laughing; “I hope she is not very angry, for I should by no means like to set her scolding.”

“You are right there, my dear child,” replied the nun; “sister Marcella is a kind mother to

the novices ; but when she begins to scold, she says three words while any one else could say one.—Mercy on us ! there she is—make haste, Signora Juliet—run on before me—she is in the passage—do not let her see you with me, or she will say that I have detained you.”

Sister Clara, as she said this, escaped round a corner, and when Marcella arrived, she found her new charge looking about with a very bewildered air, Juliet being, in truth, quite at a loss to know which way she was to go. This at once disarmed the anger of good Marcella.

“God bless you, my dear,” she exclaimed, “where in the world have you got to? Poor dear little soul, how frightened it looks—what! you were just looking for me to take you to the chapel, my dear?—that was it, wasn’t it?—Come along then—no, no, not back again—this is the way to our door—and they’ll be all waiting to have a look at us as we pass—never you doubt that.”

As soon as Juliet reached her place, her first object was to see if her aunt were visible from

it; but she had not yet entered the chapel. A moment after, however, she passed up the aisle, and almost close to Juliet, but did not appear to see her. As soon as she arrived at her station, the service began; and though in kneeling, her face was partially concealed, Juliet was struck by its unusual paleness.

Immediately after the vesper service, the whole community assembled in the refectory for supper. Juliet had now to undergo the curious examination of above a hundred eyes, which were keenly set for observation—not only because they had never seen her before, but because the fast they were obliged to keep from novelties of all kinds, created an appetite for them, which none but recluses can know. Finding herself a little embarrassed, she gladly took the arm of her new friend, Camilla, who happened to be standing near her, and turned her eyes anxiously towards the door to watch for the entrance of her aunt.

Whispered conferences were going on, all round her, though she could distinguish nothing of what was said. At length, “Here’s

the Abbess," was distinctly heard from many voices, and she entered as they spoke. Juliet was now more aware than—even when she saw her in the chapel,—that her aunt was looking extremely ill, and felt so much alarmed that she endeavoured to approach her, still holding the arm of Camilla, to inquire for her health; but before she reached her, the mother of the novices came up, and taking her hand, said—

"This way—this way, my dear. Please, sister Camilla, to take your place with the nuns; come, my dear, I will sit next you myself—make haste—see, our mother has taken her place already."

The grace was sung, and the supper passed with quiet decorum; but amid the clatter of trenchers, the soft mutterings of female tongues were occasionally audible.

The hour of recreation followed; and Juliet waited a moment before she left the hall, in the hope that Camilla would again join her. Her aunt observed her, and having caught her eye, waved her hand in the direction of a door, that

led towards the garden, by which many of the community were passing. Juliet understood that she wished her to join them, and prepared to do so ; but before she left the room, she saw the Abbess and Camilla quit it together by the opposite door.

The nuns now came crowding round her from every direction, and she was glad to distinguish sister Beatrice among them, whom she considered as an old acquaintance, and who seemed well pleased to take her under her especial protection.

“Let us all go into the garden, Signora,” said she, taking her arm, “and then you may become acquainted with your companions. Come here, sister Rosa. This is a young novice, Signora ; she has been here only a few weeks. Perhaps you two may take the veil together ; that would be very pleasant, indeed—and it would make the ceremony so grand. We shall have all Ancona, there’s no doubt of that.”

Sister Rosa looked gloomy, and answered nothing.

“That is sister Dorethea, who is close to you on that side; and here’s your old acquaintance, sister Clara:—come along.”

All this was said, as about thirty of them were all crowding together through the passage that led to the garden. Even when they had made their way through it, and were fairly in the garden, Juliet still found it very difficult to walk, from the number of nuns and novices who crowded upon her, in all directions. The party who immediately surrounded her, was composed of the younger part of the community, and many pretty faces were visible among the veiled heads.

Some walked backwards, that they might see and hear her with more convenience; some hung over her shoulders; and she was flanked on both sides by at least half a dozen, who had contrived to knot themselves together in a mass, which seemed to stick close to her, as if by one common impulse. There was hardly one of the whole set who did not instantly assail her with questions.

“ How old is the Signora ?”

“ What is the Signora’s name ?”

“ What name will the Signora take with her vows ?”

“ Perhaps the Signora will keep her own ?”

“ The Signora knows our Abbess never changed hers ?”

“ The Signora is our Abbess’s own niece.”

And then it was—

“ Has she any sisters ?”

“ Has she any brothers ?”

“ Are they grown up ?”

“ Will they come to the parlour ?”

And many many more. To all this, Juliet answered smilingly, and, as nearly as it was possible, in the same order in which they were asked.

In the midst of this scene, which, whatever the worldly reader may think of it, is by far the greatest enjoyment that can fall to the lot of a party of nuns, one of the novices, who was walking backwards, in front of Juliet, exclaimed—

"If there is not that abominable mother Marcella, coming to spoil all our pleasure!"

"Don't answer her, Signora," said another,—
"she can't scold you yet, for she is no mother of yours, till you have taken the habit."

The bustling old woman hastened towards them, calling out, as soon as she was within hearing,—
"Well, dears, here you are, like bees round honey. We have not had such a pretty new-comer for a long time—have we? Not that you are much amiss, sister Rosa, when you don't look cross.—Mind your veils, ladies; pray hold them seemly. 'Tis well the walls are high, sister Celesta. When I was a novice, I would not have let my head be uncovered like that for something; you should not let the birds in the trees see you so."

As she spoke, she fidgetted from one to another, settling a plait here, and arranging a fold there, greatly to the annoyance, as it appeared, of the young ladies on whom her cares were bestowed.

All the nuns of the party had turned off into

another walk, as soon as Marcella approached them ; and a laugh, in which, perhaps, there was less of gaiety than of ridicule, reached the spot they had left.

“ Fie, fie,” said the old woman, “ that’s the way your young heads are turned. Things are not half as they ought to be in these days. When I was a novice, no nun dared to look at our mother ;—the mother of the novices I mean, not the Abbess, you know, but the mother of the novices, like me,—no one would have ventured to come near her, without a civil ‘ Ave,’ instead of tittering away in that manner. But they tell me, every thing is changed for the worse, outside the convents as well as inside. Sister Clementina, have you said your twelve credo’s, for that horrid long stitch you put in the hyacinth ?”

Juliet began to fear, that the delight she had promised herself from residing with her instructor and friend, would not be easily enjoyed in so large a community. She was disappointed at not having been sent for, by her aunt ; she was disappointed at not being able to renew her

conversation with the melancholy, but interesting Camilla; and now that she saw no present mode of escape from the intolerable tongue of Marcella, she felt thoroughly low-spirited and unhappy. Could she see Morgante, it would be a comfort she thought; and in despair of any other, she ventured to ask the mother if the boy might be permitted to come to her in the garden?

“Why—perhaps—I don’t know—you must let me think about it, my dear. Poor little fellow! He does, to be sure, look for all the world like a rabbit in a drawing-room. It will be but Christian charity, I believe, to let him have a look at you. Well—wait here a bit then, and I’ll go and see about it.”

Juliet thanked her for her kindness, and she set off, muttering as she went,—“No great harm can come of it—he is but a baby, though they call him a page—in my time—” and so she went on, till quite out of hearing.

“A page?—did she say a page?” demanded

one of the young girls, who was standing near Juliet.

"You have not brought a page with you, Signora Juliet?—have you?" said another.

"My aunt," replied Juliet, "begged my father to let her have the boy who acted as my page, to assist her secretary in writing for her; for one so young, he writes excellently well."

"And your page is coming here?" again questioned the young novice;—"Well! he must have bewitched mother Marcella, that is certain, or she never would dream of bringing him here."

"How old is he?"

"Is he well born?"

"What is his name?"

"Is he handsome?"

"Is he tall?"

These questions, and many more of equal importance, were eagerly asked, while every girl in the group found some little arrangement

necessary for her veil, or her hood, or her rosary, and every eye was turned to the gate at which they expected to see him enter.

In a few minutes, Marcella again appeared, and till she had advanced some steps, they thought she had returned alone. At length, peeping from behind her, was seen the miniature page, and "Oh-h-h!" in every imaginable accent of disappointment, chagrin, and surprise, was uttered simultaneously by the whole party. Juliet observed the universal air of vexation, and could hardly resist her inclination to laugh; her attention, however, was immediately drawn to her little favourite, and she was delighted to see that he looked as gay and saucy as ever; though she rather wondered that so active a spirit could have endured the restraint he must have been subjected to, and yet keep so merry an eye as that with which he now regarded her. She knew not all the causes of mirth he had found in the kitchen of the convent, nor the variety of dainties and presents which the elder, and more privileged members of the community

had already bestowed on him. Notwithstanding all this, he was in extacies at the sight of his young mistress, and exclaimed, with a view to the consideration of the place where he was, "the ears that were listening to him,—

"The Virgin and all her holy company praised, Signora! I thought, for certain, that you had locked you up in your cell; and I would have climbed that high wall there, and clambered over the windows, one after another, till I got out.—What a beautiful garden you have got—
—and all these ladies are the nuns, I see—but they are prettier than the nuns that I saw at Albano.—I suppose, ma'am, (addressing Marcella) that you would not trust them out, for fear they should never come back. Well—I am sure, they all will be as merry as Olive herself. May I come and walk in this garden with you, Signora, when you are so like?"

"You don't know what you are talking of, my darling," said old Marcella;—"we shall soon have a visit from my lord Abbot

ask what was the matter with us, if that were granted, I take it.—No, no, my man, you must run about, outside the walls, when you want exercise. We don't want to make a nun of you, you know—but for the garden—no.”

Morgante looked at the novices, and they all laughed.

“Away with you, my man,” said Marcella, giving him a gentle push,—“away with you, I say; your eyes are older than your stature. I must have no looking and laughing among my young ladies here. Come along, master page, come along.”

“May I not speak one word to my lady mistress?” said Morgante.

“Well then, make haste—speak away, and have done.”

“Are you happy, Signora?” said the boy in a low whisper; but Juliet discreetly answered him aloud.

“Yes, Morgante, very happy. And pray how do you like the convent? I hope you are very well behaved and orderly?”

“Why, as for my liking the convent, Signora, I shall find no fault with it, provided we do not stay too long—and, as for my behaviour, I suppose it is as it should be, because more old ladies than I ever saw in my life before, have done nothing but pat my head, and call me dear and darling, ever since I arrived.”

The novices again laughed aloud at this sally.

“Come along, you little imp you,” said the mother, seizing him by the shoulder, “they shall none of them call you so again, I promise ye.”

The boy could not resist his inclination to laugh, though it appeared as if Marcella shook him not very gently, as she led him away.

“Cross old plague!” cried one of the young ladies, who felt disposed to forgive the diminutive size of the page, in favour of his sauciness.

“Cross old plague! I perfectly hate her.”

“We have got rid of her for the present at any rate,” observed another; and again Juliet had to hear, and answer as she could, innume-

rable questions, respecting herself, her family, and her home.

The remainder of the evening wore heavily away. No message from her aunt—no intimation that she was remembered—no farther intercourse with Camilla. When notice was given that the novices were to retire to their cells for the night, Juliet addressed herself to Marcella, and anxiously asked if she might not visit her aunt.

“My dear!—as if you could go without being sent for,” replied the old woman: “she is not my aunt, to be sure; but I think I know her better than you do, for all that. She is a good, and most holy lady—our convent’s a pattern,—but it won’t do to make too free with her. Every body must know their place here—you understand, my dear?”

Juliet understood nothing, but that she was disappointed and unhappy; and when at length she retired to her cell, she lay down upon her little bed, and fairly cried herself to sleep.

About an hour before midnight, she was awakened by the light of a lamp falling full upon her eyes; she looked up, and saw her aunt standing beside her.

"My poor Juliet!" she said affectionately, "This has been a sad day for you—and for me too, my love. But it was impossible for me to see you before."

"Thank God!" exclaimed Juliet, "that you are come to see me now. Oh! I have been too unhappy! Tell me—are you ill? Has any thing happened to you? Is not something the matter?"

"Alas! yes, dearest—much, much is the matter. I have suffered more in mind since I returned home, Juliet, than during the whole period of my dwelling here."

"Gracious heaven! and are you suffering still? Tell me," exclaimed Juliet, suddenly starting up; "does any danger threaten you?"

"None, dear girl," replied the Abbess, in a voice of cheering confidence; "none that I shall not have the power to baffle, as I have done

before a hundred times. But the anxiety I speak of, was for another; for that poor Camilla; her situation is most dreadful—but I shall save her—my whole plan is now arranged, and I am tranquil; be you so too, dearest. Good night, my Juliet; I could not sleep till I had said one word to you; but you must wait for all explanation till to-morrow. Good night."

"But stay one moment," cried Juliet; "when may I come to your parlour? Must I always wait till you send for me? Tell me where it is that we can talk together? May you come and sit with me here?"

Geraldine answered with a smile, "You have asked so many questions, Juliet, and some of them so difficult to answer, that I think they must all be postponed till to-morrow morning. You shall breakfast with me."

"Alone?"

"Yes, alone; and then you may ask me as many questions as you please; and, moreover, I promise to answer them all. Good night!"

thought she, in some

can change the whole asp
moment.

CHAPTER XXI.

All the fair effects of future hopes.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE next morning, sister Agatha came to the cell of Juliet, and told her that the Lady Abbess waited breakfast for her. She was quite ready, and, with spirits recruited by a night of sound sleep, and a morning of bright sun-shine, walked gaily through the long corridors with her gentle companion.

"Have you rested well, Signora?" said the nun.

"Never better, dear sister; your convent is delightful. What a garden! what flowers!"

in Italy."

"And are they all so comfortable?"

"All exactly alike; except the sisters have images and reli-

"And the air is so fine here, the convent must be very healthy?"

"I believe so.—Our chapel has golden candlesticks of any church, out of Rome."

"Really!—and all the rooms are so lofty, and so well aired?"

"Yes.—We have three images in solid silver, beside our Sancti that is silver gilt."

"You don't say so?—In the school was educated, our refectory was

it is the only relic in Italy that has got diamonds round the lock and handle of the coffer in which it is kept."

"Altogether your convent seems to be very superior."

"It is the first in Italy."

"You must feel very happy in belonging to it."

"Yes, very.—Only the years seem so long!"

On reaching the apartment of the Abbess, Juliet was again surprised by the air of comfort and cheerfulness which it exhibited. She had not believed that any room in a nunnery could be so pleasant. It was situated on the floor below her cell, and commanded the same view of the garden, having ~~two~~^{two} large casements, which opened upon balconies filled with flowers. From the size and shape of the room, it was evident that it had been intended either for a public parlour, or a room for business. The Abbess certainly used it as the latter, as was evident from the number of papers lying upon a table at which she was writing, and the many more

spread upon a table close to an

Sister Agatha took her leave. Juliet entered alone. The Abbess embraced her, and the embrace which Juliet felt that she was once more of her aunt. She looked round the cheerful room with equal satisfaction—

“Is it possible,” she exclaimed, “is what I have almost died in this being in a convent?—is it in the hands of the fearful Abbess of St.

Geraldine, who looked and felt as her niece, answered gaily—

“And is this having a little upon one—who has just lost her wood?”

Juliet blushed, and shook her head.

mind, and at the very moment when I have almost succeeded, you bring it back again. Poor fellow! I wish he knew how very happy I am——my dear aunt, how do you make oranges and myrtles grow so beautifully small as these are?"

The Abbess looked at her, and laughed.

"Do you know, Juliet," said she, "that I begin to doubt if you are really very much in love, after all."

"Oh yes I am," she replied gravely, "I love him very dearly—and—I think I should break my heart if he did not love me. But every thing was so different before I knew you. I cannot express to you how completely I felt alone in the world. If I had had a sister—or if my brother had been older than I am—I should have been a very different girl.

"Do you repent then, Juliet?"

"Repent, aunt?—repent having listened to him? I do not mean that—but—if you knew how often I have wandered about that garden and that wood, and longed to have a friend to

known you

easily wooed—be sure of that.

The Abbess listened to her
tion, and as if anxious to a
passing in her heart.

“Tell me,” she said, “de
it be with all your own frank
think that your feelings too
changed since you have known

“Towards Hubert, as you
I am sure they are not—but
feelings about myself, are con

“But this may be enough
you wish your engagement
exist. Do not trifle with him
—I mean to say that his m
me sufficiently, to make m
should fully understand the

I would—you cannot guess how much I would do to overcome them; but this could only be if I were convinced that your whole heart were his. If you are not quite sure of this—confess it, Juliet, and I will give it up at once.”

During the whole of this speech, Juliet was engaged in stripping the leaves off a branch of myrtle—but on hearing the last words, it fell upon her lap; she clasped her hands fervently together, and said with passionate earnestness—

“You tell me to speak frankly, aunt, and I will do so. Rather than give him up, I would forsake name, country, and kindred—and that without a thought of wavering—unless I looked back to take a last glance at you. Perhaps,” she added, while tears started to her eyes, “perhaps you think me childish and inconstant, but he shall not find me so.”

“Enough, enough, dear love! I am satisfied, and you may be so too, Juliet. Fancy that you have some good fairy for a god-mother, who will bring about all you desire, without giving you any trouble about the matter—and

remember, above all things, that if you ask any questions, her power will be destroyed—now then, pick up your branch of myrtle, and listen to the clear notes of that beautiful blackbird—moreover, let us eat our breakfast.”

It was certainly with something very like the blind reliance upon supernatural power which the Abbess recommended, that Juliet now rested her hopes, almost without a shadow of anxiety as to the future. So perfect was this hope and confidence, that she would not have formed a wish for the present, beyond what she enjoyed, had it not been for the air of thought and anxiety which she again saw settling on the countenance of her aunt. This painful expression was immediately reflected on her own, and she looked an anxious inquiry, though she spoke none.

“I see that you are uneasy about me, Juliet; I saw it yesterday in the glances you cast on me at chapel, and in the refectory—you are right:—all is not as it should be.”

“Your anxiety is for poor Camilla? Is it not so?”

"It is indeed. But how do you know this? Surely she has not communicated her situation to you?"

"She has told me nothing, except in general terms that she was most unhappy—she said too, that if you would hear her, she would communicate the cause to you."

"She has done so, Juliet—and though I would willingly spare you the pain of sharing my anxiety, I cannot do this—I must consult you on one very important point, on which only you can answer me—and while doing this, I will not keep you ignorant of my reasons for it. It will, indeed, be a most dear comfort to me to have your sympathy—and, perhaps, your assistance in the business I am upon."

"Heaven grant I may be able to help you, my dearest aunt!" replied Juliet; "I need not tell you how willing I am to do so."

"Indeed you need not. But first let me be satisfied on one most important point. Think you, Juliet, that I may venture to trust Morgante in a business precious as life?"

may—but if you ask, what confidence place in his strength or knowledge—I know what to say. He has never been exposed to danger or fatigue—and is as ignorant of every thing beyond the circuit of ten miles from Albano, as the babe born yesterday.”

“That matters not—he shall be well guarded; but I want his wit and his fidelity.”

“Then you may trust him—and I will give my honour for the truth of his.”

“That is well, Juliet. This assurance is the most important—as you will see. No other man is so true to me. This unhappy woman is a wife, as she assures me, and as I truly believed her to be two months before the time at which it was discovered she was professed. This ceremony, she

her marriage, from the fear of compromising the Count di Mondello her husband, who was already marked for persecution by the same powerful enemy who was seeking to destroy her. She felt that the ceremony was only an idle profanation, in the sin of which she had no share—and she had entire confidence in the efforts that she knew would be made for her release. In effect, her escape was contrived, and so far successfully, that she got clear of the convent—but was immediately pursued, traced, and taken.

“A few weeks before I left my convent for Albano, I received, from the hands of Isidore, a *request* (which was in fact an order) from the very highest authority that I would receive sister Camilla into my community. No allusion whatever was made to her former life; but it was stated that circumstances made it desirable for her to change her convent—the name of which, however, was not mentioned. She came—and, as I before stated, her sadness, her appearance of ill-health, and her general manner interested me. When I re-

turned yesterday, I knew no more of her, than you did. You remember that one of the nuns came to the parlour while we were sitting there together, and that I dismissed you. Her visit was for the purpose of informing me, that many strange surmises had arisen, during my absence, respecting sister Camilla. It seems that the community is divided into two distinct factions—the one being of opinion that the unhappy creature was about to be a mother—and the other, that she shows symptoms of insanity, and a wish to destroy herself. I immediately summoned all those to whose opinion and judgment I thought I could pay the most attention, and till vespers, I was engaged in this examination; though without being able to ascertain that there was any reasonable foundation for either opinion. I determined to see and converse with Camilla; but felt that I should not be justified in stating to her, suspicions so vague, yet so terrible. When I was about to leave the refectory, after supper, she suddenly approached me, and asked in a voice that was scarcely audible, if I would per-

mit her to speak to me—I brought her hither—and she told me a tale of such wickedness and such woe, as I am willing to hope has seldom been equalled. Alas! Juliet, the suspicions of her companions are but too well-founded. In two months the unhappy creature will be a mother.”

“What then will be her fate? Have I not heard of dreadful punishments—Oh, my dear aunt! what will become of her?—What will become of you?”

“Ay, Juliet,” replied Geraldine, turning very pale, “there is a punishment——”

“But not here? You will not let it fall upon her here?”

“My child! my own Juliet!” exclaimed the Abbess, with great emotion,—“it never shall, as long as I retain life, and power to prevent it.”

“But tell me the worst,” cried Juliet, trembling violently,—“tell me what is the sentence?—and what may they do to you, if you

“Have you ever heard those frightful mocking words, ‘Requiescat in pace?’—and do you know their horrid meaning?”

Juliet’s only answer was hiding her pale face in the bosom of her aunt. Who, in those days but had heard of that living death?—its hideous preparation?—its maddening stillness?—its dark, cold, lingering agony? Who had not heard that the young, the lovely, and the gentle, had been laid a conscious corse, within a loathsome tomb, for being found in the same state as that of Camilla?

“Look up, dear Juliet,” said her aunt, “look up—it shall never be. They may burn me at the stake—but they cannot make me look on such a sight as that.”

“Can it not be concealed? Who knows her condition?”

“No one knows it—though many have spoken of its being possible—It will, I think, be easy to turn this aside.—They are still doubtful, which of the two suspicions that are afloat has most probability. I have but to say that I believe

her mad—and the other idea will die away within an hour.”

“Then for heaven’s sake delay not—I will leave you—shall I send any one ——”

“Stay, Juliet—you must not leave me yet—you forget, dear child, that this report, though I may be able to stifle it for a moment, must revive again—the slightest accident—increased indisposition—a moment’s weakness, and she is lost!”

“Oh true! most true!” exclaimed Juliet with a shudder.

“We must instantly prepare to profit by the interval I hope to obtain. She must leave the convent—but should I send her forth in her present situation, without some one to protect and assist her in her need—I should hardly save her by it. Camilla tells me that there is one person, and one only, that she could freely trust to—this is the woman who nursed her; she lives at Rome, but could we bring her here, Camilla would be content to trust herself to her activity, courage, and well-tried affection. She doubts not, that the count her husband is already in

England. His property had been fortunately sent thither before the sentence of banishment was uttered against him, and till she can meet him, she shall be hospitably received in the mansion of my uncle."

"All this is easy—the difficulty is to communicate with this nurse, Jacintha Corri. I can trust to no courier—I have long known that nothing sent from me, to Rome, arrives there unsearched. Sometimes banditti stop my couriers—sometimes they lose their dispatches where they repose—and many other accidents occur—but always terminate by some fortunate chance, which restores the lost papers—the men themselves, and all those to whom they recount these wonderful adventures, are lost in astonishment at their frequent recurrence—I have never helped any one to interpret the marvel—but I take care to write nothing that Isidore Bartone may not read.—This summons to Camilla's nurse must not be sent by me—and here it is, dear Juliet, that I think your page may be of most precious service. Think you not that he may

be made to understand the strait that we are in, sufficiently to bear our message safely to Jacintha Corri?"

"Be very sure he may—let him but understand that your safety rests upon his caution, and you will find both his fidelity and his sharp wit will stand the test of service."

"Then we will lose no time—seek poor Camilla, my dear Juliet—and bring her to me—I will send for Morgante, and as soon as we have, between us, made him fully aware of the real business of our embassy, I will sit down to write such letters for my friends at Rome, as may pass freely."

Juliet hastened to execute this commission, and returned almost immediately with Camilla; nor did the search for the page take long; the Abbess's message found him surrounded by elderly recluses, whom he was amusing by his conversation; which, as it was garnished on this occasion with all the learning, and all the holy saws he had ever heard from Father Laurence, seemed little less than miraculous to the good nuns.

CHAPTER XXII.

The good I stand on is my truth and honesty.

SHAKSPEARE.

WHEN the little council were assembled, the Abbess, who had previously explained her object to Camilla, addressed the page with an inquiry of—how he had passed the night?—if he had breakfasted well?—and the like. She was not unconscious of the imposing effect of her usual manner, and was desirous of setting the boy at his ease, before they opened to him the important business in which they required his aid.

The careless indifference expressed by the countenance of Morgante, contrasted strangely with the anxious looks of the three females; and

poor Camilla, as she fixed her eyes on the puny stature and childish air of the boy, sighed as she thought how desperate that hope must be, which rested for success on the power and will of such an agent.

Juliet read her thoughts, and giving her aunt a look, which she interpreted rightly to mean—
Let me settle it with him,—she called the boy to her, and taking him by the hand, said slowly and gravely—

“Listen very attentively, my dear Morgante, to what I am going to say to you ——”

In an instant, the whole bearing and manner of the boy were changed.—He raised his eyes to the face of his young mistress, with a look of such deep interest and keen attention, that before he had spoken a word in reply, Camilla raised her head from the hand with which she had supported it, and looked and listened till hope seemed once more awakened within her.

Juliet stated the case exactly as it stood; and though at the first moment of her doing so, both the Abbess and Camilla started, and exchanged

a glance of doubt and alarm, a very short time sufficed to convince them, that Juliet knew well what she was about. After listening to the whole, including the task he was to perform, in perfect silence, Morgante stepped across the room, to where the pale and sorrow-stricken woman sat, whose life was now trusted to his discretion. There was something very touching in the manner in which he changed the clear shrill treble of his usual tone, almost into a whisper as he said,—

“Lady—I would to God that you had a stouter friend to help you in this matter—but for truth and good will——Do not fear, dear lady, to trust to my young mistress——She would not speak as she has spoken——she would not let you trust this message to me, if there were any danger in your doing so.—Teach me the words I am to say; let me repeat them to you, that I may know I have learnt them rightly; and after that, I will carry them to Rome, and bury them in the ears of your nurse.”

Camilla was completely reassured—and so

great was the change from utter hopelessness to the chance of escape that was now opened to her, that she no longer seemed the same being. Her opinion of Morgante's fitness for his embassy was now stronger than ever her doubts had been; and throwing aside all restraint, she stated fully all the horrors that awaited her, were she disappointed in her present hope; and all the confidence she felt in being able to escape these, if Jacintha would come to her.

The Abbess and Juliet spoke not a word, but both felt that the newly awakened courage of Camilla, and the shrewdness of their little agent, justified the most sanguine hopes for the success of their scheme.

Having fully possessed the boy of what she wished him to say, and heard him repeat it with punctilious exactness, Camilla rose, and approaching the Abbess, and her niece, attempted to speak of thanks—and eternal gratitude; but her heart was much too full, and she left the room, to indulge in the solitude of her cell the new

other parts of the character he was to assume. In this, there was no great difficulty. The courier was to have charge of him till he was placed in the hands of the person to whom he was recommended by a letter from herself. The palazzo was so near the residence of Jacintha Corri, as to render his getting there perfectly easy. His pronouncing the name of the Countess di Mondello, would at once insure his reception by her, and when once he was in her hands, the remainder of his task would be easy. The ostensible motive of his journey was to deliver in a letter from the Abbess to a distinguished friend at Rome, recommending his fine voice as a valuable acquisition to the private collection of the Vatican. This fine voice (which he really possessed), he was suddenly lost by a cold caught on the journey, and

ay, to the protection which the Abbess stood
dged to afford him. Jacintha Corri had in
possession a considerable sum of money be-
ging to the Countess di Mondello, which had
en provided for her last ill-starred escape, and
as all contingencies appeared to be provided for.
Whatever Geraldine d'Albano undertook, was
formed with a promptitude and rapidity, which
en gave her the appearance of possessing means
action, equal to her will; and this peculiar
characteristic of her mind had greatly increased
e idea generally conceived of her extraordinary
wer and influence. Before the hour of noon,
r letters were written; her courier and his
werful horse ready to start, and Morgante,
rnished with a pillion, which would render his
at behind him both easy and secure.

When the community assembled in the refec-
ty for dinner, the travellers were already on their
nd; and the Abbess, her young niece, and the
nfortunate object of their anxious care, felt as
f half the difficulties which had encompassed
hem the night before, were already surmounted.

The Abbess recommended to Camilla, carefully to conceal the happy change which had taken place in the state of her spirits; to continue her lonely rambles under the mulberry trees, and to confirm the idea of mental derangement, as far as she could do so, without drawing too great a degree of attention upon her. Immediately after dinner Geraldine ordered some of the oldest, and most, influential among the nuns, to attend her, and having indulged them, by listening to all their own conjectures respecting Camilla, she gave it as her decided opinion, that the unfortunate nun was not in her right senses, but that it would be cruel and unchristianlike to act upon this belief, till they were very sure it was well founded. She therefore requested them all to use their influence with the younger part of the community, that no mention of this melancholy suspicion should be made at the next visit of the Abbot—nor even, if it could possibly be avoided, any allusion to it uttered in confession.

The Abbess, as she had anticipated, found no

great difficulty in calming the alarm that had begun to spread through the convent. The elder nuns, among whom it had arisen, were sufficiently discreet to confine their speculations upon it to those of their own standing. There was, however, one opinion, which prevailed generally through the convent, and this was, that sister Camilla was unhappy. Some members of the society, who loved the terrible, had hinted an opinion, that she intended to destroy herself. Her long solitary walks, her avoidance of all conversation, and the unvarying sadness of her countenance, were all stated to be proofs of an infirm state of mind, very likely to lead to such a result. To this suggestion, the Abbess of course listened with great appearance of attention; but constantly repeated her injunctions, that they should patiently wait for the development of further symptoms, before they openly expressed their opinions.

This, she well knew, would be quite sufficient to render mystery on the subject the fashion throughout the whole establishment. The mut-

tered consultations, the gossiping committees, and the whispered forebodings, that she was well assured must take place, would only tend to confirm the impression which it was her wish to spread, respecting the unfortunate object of her anxiety.

It was the same sister Agatha, who had first mentioned to the Abbess the suspicion of poor Camilla's pregnancy, that now became the principal organ of the rumour which succeeded.

As soon as the conference with the Abbess was ended, sister Agatha repaired to the cell of her most familiar friend, sister Maria, and found her engaged with two others in a close and deep discussion on the very subject which she now came to enlighten. The words she heard on entering were,—

“It is not for holy women like ourselves, sister Margaretta, to pretend to understand such matters; but, in holy truth, I believe that the devoted creature is—as no nun can be—and live.”

“Talk not so wildly, good sister,” said Agatha,

own among them,—“I came but now
Abbess.”

what says she? for the love of God,
you have heard.”

says,” replied Agatha, “exactly what
and gifted a person might be expected
—exactly what I always thought my-

n it is so!” said sister Margaretta,
ly.

, indeed, is it,” returned Agatha. “I
ny one of you could ever have made
n on the subject. To see the wild look
or eyes is quite enough.”

hat a symptom, sister Agatha?” asked
nocently.

be sure it is; and then her long silent
nder those dark trees ——. She must
ed closely, holy sisters, or it will be all
a her, before we know where we are.”

holy Virgin protect us! Is it so near
er Agatha?”

r?—Who shall say how near it is?

Who shall say how soon a poor distracted creature may find the means of putting an end to her life?"

"Distracted?" said all three, in a sort of flattened tone of voice, wherein a fine and subtile ear might have caught a slight, but most strange mixture of disappointment.

"Distracted?" reiterated sister Margaretta.—
"But the other dreadful fear——what says she to that?"

"What can she say, more than exactly what I said myself, sister Margaretta? It is all stuff and nonsense, dear sisters. It was only the folly of that silly woman, sister Madaline, that set the story about."

Her three auditors looked blank; yet there was nothing approaching to cruelty in the nature of either of them, and the natural substratum of a woman's heart appeared the moment after; but so strong was the craving, in their stagnant state of existence, for whatever could excite unusual feeling, that any emotion, however terrible, was at the first moment rather welcome than other-

wise. A hurricane is a relief after the horrid stillness of a long deep calm.

"Thank God!" said sister Teresa, after the interval of a moment.

"Thank the holy Mother of Jesus!" said Maria fervently.

"Blessed be all the saints!" exclaimed Margaretta, devoutly crossing herself; "madness is terrible ——; but what is that compared to the ——."

"In pace!——" added Teresa, in a low whisper.

"Don't terrify yourselves by thinking about that, good sisters," said Agatha; "I believe our mother is not over well-pleased that such a notion should be put into circulation. Sister Madaline ought to do penance for having spoken it. Because she went once to take leave of her cousin when she died in child-bed, she fancies that she knows more about all these things than any one else in the community; and that's a sin of presumption, to say the least of it."

The four holy gossips then set out, by common

consent, to spread the Abbess's opinion respecting Camilla's state of mind, throughout the establishment; and before they assembled for supper, all the nuns, and most of the novices, had been made acquainted with all she had said, and a great deal more.

While this discussion was affording occupation to nearly the whole convent, Geraldine, relieved from the first deadly terror which the confession of Camilla occasioned her, invited Juliet to walk with her on the terrace that overlooked the sea.

"What?—the beautiful terrace we saw from the water?" inquired Juliet. "How strange it is, that I should so completely have forgotten it! But where is it? I have been in many rooms, but have seen none that overlook it."

"There are none, Juliet. It would hardly satisfy the jealous caution of the church, could her devotees hold such free communion with the world, though only with their eyes, as such a prospect would permit. No; we have no

rooms that overlook the Adriatic. The range of windows, which you saw as the vessel passed, were those of the chapel."

"And do you pass through the chapel to reach the terrace?" inquired Juliet, observing that her aunt led the way towards it.

"I might answer both yes and no to that, Juliet, for either would be true. We must enter the building of which the chapel makes part, and yet we do not pass through the chapel. This passage," she continued, putting a key into the lock of a small door, which immediately yielded before her; "this passage was constructed, I believe, merely for the workmen who might be required to keep the building in repair, for it leads only to a rude chamber where ladders, tools, ropes, and other lumber are deposited. The chapel is to the right of us; and here," she added, advancing into the lumber-room she had described, "here are various doors, which give access to different parts of the building. This one, I believe, leads up to the belfry and the leads; this opens directly into the chapel, behind

the massive monument of our founder, which serves to conceal it; and here," advancing to a small archway, "we shall find that which is to conduct us to the terrace."

With the same key she now opened a low and narrow door at the foot of a steep flight of steps; after mounting a few of which, Juliet felt the fresh sea breeze from above, and, quickly clearing the rest, she stepped out upon a broad terrace, flanked by the graceful lancet windows of the chapel, on one side, and overlooking the sunny waves of the Adriatic, on the other. She uttered an exclamation of surprise and delight, as she looked out upon the view that the spot she stood upon commanded. Ancona, with its grove of masts, its towers, and its castle, were visible at the distance of two miles; but the clear bright atmosphere, through which she saw it, gave it the appearance of being much nearer.

"You do not think I praised my walk too much, Juliet?"

"It would be impossible!—how delicious is this shade, when all the rest of the world seems

in broad sunshine ! Well may you love this walk, my dear aunt."

"It is because I do love it so much, that I come to it by the obscure passage I have shown you. You look as if you thought this a strange reason—but I can easily explain it. It is at this end, to which we are now approaching, that the regular and handsome approach to it is situated. Under this arch, which, as you perceive, is made to correspond with the range of chapel windows, is a door-way, leading from the gallery by which the Abbot of St. Andrea enters his seat, when he attends mass in our chapel. This gallery runs from the public corridor at the top of the great staircase, and I could hardly enter it without the chance of meeting some poor weary-looking nun, who would give one of her fingers to join me in my walk. But not to mention that this would greatly destroy my enjoyment, I really could not permit it, without running the risk of a reprimand from our visitor the Abbot, and therefore I have decided not to put myself in the way of being tempted to it, by the beseeching

eyes of my poor recluses. It is for this reason that I almost always make use of this obscure approach, which effectually secures me from any chance of meeting them."

"Poor things!" said Juliet, as she looked over the balustrades upon the bright and wide expanse of the sea, "I really pity them for this privation. Have they never, then, looked upon this lovely view?"

"They enjoy it twice in every year; and perhaps the more keenly, Juliet, because it comes no oftener. There are two religious festivals,—one, that of the Assumption, on the 15th of August; and the other, somewhat less splendid, in honour of John the Baptist, on the 24th of June,—which are celebrated by a procession of barges from Ancona to Case Brugiate. On these occasions, our whole community come out upon this terrace, and sing a hymn as it passes. The balustrades are hung with pictures, tapestry, and innumerable garlands of flowers; and the preparing for these galas is, to our idle household, quite as great a source of enjoyment as the

pageants themselves. But now, my dearest Juliet, let me speak to you on a topic, which I should not have delayed even thus long, but for the sad business which has occupied me since yesterday. I had not meant to have slept, after bringing you under my own roof, Juliet, without conversing with you upon a subject the most important to which human beings can turn their thoughts. Tell me, my love, and speak wholly without fear, has your confessor made you acquainted with the great truths of religion?"

"My confessor has taught me," replied Juliet, "to repeat many prayers, to attend, as regularly as may be, the offices of the chapel, and to confess all my sins to him once every month."

"Do you understand the prayers you repeat, or those you listen to?"

"I do not," answered Juliet, colouring.

"You have heard much of the reformed religion, my dear child; do you understand what its doctrines are?"

"I believe so."

"Explain them to me."

“ They are doctrines which must doom—as Father Laurence says, but as I do not believe—all who believe them, to eternal punishment.”

“ And the catholic religion, Juliet, what are its doctrines ?”

Juliet burst into tears.

“ Ought I to know all this, my dearest aunt ?” she said.

“ Assuredly, my love,” replied the Abbess.

“ Then may the God of mercy forgive me !” said Juliet, with great emotion, “ for, alas ! I know nothing of it.”

“ Fear not that I should mislead you, Juliet—I understand that look, dearest—I know you cannot fear it. But darkness, deeper than that of midnight, envelopes your spirit. Have you strength to bear the light ?”

“ If you will let it in upon me, my only friend—I am conscious of my ignorance—I feel how unworthy the religious instruction I have received, is of the great subject it pretended to teach me.—I would worship the God that made

me, in the way that should please him best—and you shall teach me that way. Ignorant as I am, I feel assured that with you, I am safe. My happiness in this life—my salvation in that which is to come—are in your hands. Had I any pledge yet dearer, most willingly would I give it, to prove how entirely I love and trust you !”

Geraldine was deeply affected.

“ It is an awful pledge, my Juliet,” she said, after a moment’s silence ; “ but I should be false alike to Heaven and to you, did I refuse it. May the God who has preserved me for this happy hour, through so many years of danger, lead you, by my hand, to the altar where my dear mother worshipped Him ! This, Juliet, is my first, I could almost say, my only wish on earth.”

It was impossible that eyes and voice could speak more affection, than did those, with which Juliet answered this assurance. The few words which had just passed between them, were in truth a great comfort to both ; the last barrier to their

perfect unity of thought and feeling was removed, and, notwithstanding the difference of age, both equally felt this happiness.

“One short month ago,” said Geraldine, “I dared not hope that I should ever again taste the pleasure I now enjoy. My situation has been one of frightful restraint; and but for the persuasion that I was doing good to many, whose fate was still sadder than my own, I could not have supported it.”

“And these poor nuns, my dear aunt, do none of them know—have none ever known and shared your principles?”

“Not one, Juliet. Could I, by the sacrifice of my life, have turned this dreary abode of heartless superstition, into a society of happy grateful worshippers of the bounteous God of nature—could I have led them in safety and in freedom to a pure protestant altar, I would have done it, though I had mounted my funeral pile the hour after. But I had no such power. I might have spoken the words of God to some, who I think would have listened to me; but I

could not do it, without exposing them to the risk of persecution, tortures, and death. I find no law of Christ that warrants such an act."

"But has not the witnessing a superstitious worship been a constant source of unhappiness to you?" said Juliet.

"Far from it.—A mind sincerely devout, my dear Juliet, will find in every religion that invokes the living God, too much in common with its own feelings, to experience any repugnance at witnessing its ceremonies. At least, such are my feelings. There is but one state of mind on this subject which I cannot tolerate. The absence of all religion leaves man a monster—and it is rather instinct, than judgment, that makes us loathe him——. No, Juliet, the joining my voice to those of my innocent, but ill-taught nuns, has never caused me to pray less fervently. Think not, that I could profane an altar dedicated to God, by kneeling in impious mockery before it. Whether within the

walls of that chapel, or here, beneath the vault reared in its perfect beauty by His own indulgent hand, I am equally before Him."

"I can understand that," replied Juliet; "but there are circumstances in your situation, which are still inconceivable to me. How is it, beloved friend, that with principles so totally at variance with those of all around you, you have contrived to obtain the reputation of being the strictest and holiest Abbess of the age?"

"By honestly deserving it, Juliet. The duties of the Roman Catholic religion are no where more regularly attended to, or performed with more ready obedience, than in my convent. Were it otherwise, I should be very criminal. I had not the power of conferring the blessing of my own religion upon them, but I have laboured incessantly to confirm and strengthen their trust in God, and their Saviour, and to guard the due performance of the rites, with which their fathers worshipped Him."

"But surely many other superiors may be

found, who are equally observant in these respects, yet no name resounds through the catholic world like yours."

The Abbess smiled.

"You are a close inquirer, Juliet, and the answer to your question involves what I believe to be the great secret in the art of governing. It is not strict discipline, which produces rebellion; but the vexatious interference of power, on points where its exertion is unnecessary. To define correctly where the exercise of authority would be advantageous, and where it would not, was my first study. The religious observances being exactly performed, and the rule of the convent punctually obeyed, I have interfered no farther than might serve to show the affectionate interest I take in the welfare and happiness of each and all of them. Another of my secrets is, that I never dispense with the laws by which I profess to govern. The regulations of the establishment have not been changed in any very essential points, since I became the superior; like those of most others, they are wise and beneficial to

all—my great innovation has been, the taking care that they were invariably followed. Before I had been Abbess a week, my nuns discovered that such was my purpose—and I have had wonderfully little trouble about it since. A punishment that is known to be inevitable, is either not incurred, or quietly submitted to; add to this, that I never had a favourite, and you are in possession of my whole mystery.”

The bell for vespers began to ring, as the Abbess spoke the last words, and Juliet uttered an exclamation, expressive of regret that their walk must end.

“It shall be renewed to-morrow, dearest,” said the Abbess cheerfully. “I guessed well that you would love this spot as dearly as I do. This shall be our school and our temple, Juliet; and it is here that I hope to find what will console me for my long long fast from the delightful intercourse of unrestrained confidence.”

Geraldine now approached the principal door which opened upon the terrace.

“We will return this way, Juliet,” said she,

"and I will pass into the chapel by the little staircase by which our visitor descends from his seat to the altar, when he chooses to receive the sacrament of communion with us."

"And does the same key open it, aunt?—how very convenient that is."

"This instrument is the master-key to every lock in the building—by this I can enter every cell, at all hours of the day or night. It opens, too, the grates of our vaults, and from those sombre chambers to the comfortable kitchen buttery, I can pass with equal facility, and assurance that nothing can stop me."

"And where do you keep this important instrument?" inquired Juliet, laughing: "if you will tell me that, I shall fancy that I can march off whenever I like."

"You ask in jest, Juliet; but I shall answer you in earnest, and do not forget what I tell you. This key, when it is not in my hand, is always placed on the bottom shelf of the stand in my sitting room, whereon are laid the letters and papers that are set aside from my writing

table. I keep it thus ready to my hand, in case of fire; and I am not sorry to have a confident in this too—though I hope no such calamity is likely to befall us."

They now separated—the Abbess entering the door which led to the chapel, and Juliet pursuing her way down the great staircase to the room where the novices assembled to wait for Marcella, part of whose duty it was to accompany them into chapel.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Even about it now—I will pardon you.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE courier, with whom Morgante left the convent, was a stout soldier, named Michael Gatzö. He was armed to the teeth, and so well mounted, that the additional weight of the page was an incumbrance of no great consequence.

Luckily for the petted child, who had never before been beyond the reach of partial kindness, and of female care, the rough-looking soldier was kind-hearted.

“Sit you easily, my lad?” said he, after they had trotted the first mile of their long

journey.—“This is a rough pace for limbs so tender as yours.”

“Fear not for me, signor soldier,” answered the boy, boldly; “if I have never trotted on a war-horse, I have tried a wild gallop, as my lord Count’s Jennet can tell: I fear not a horse, good signor soldier, at any pace you can put him to.”

“That’s well, my man,” replied Michael, “then we may hope to do the reverend lady’s bidding, and that was to make all speed—yet your bones shall fare never the worse for it.”

“Disappoint not the good lady for me, Signor Michael; if your horse will go as fast as I would have him, the church shall have no cause to complain of your neglecting her business.”

Nothing could tend more to the establishing a good understanding between the fellow travelers than this discovery of kindness on the one part, and fearlessness on the other. Morgante exerted all his talents to amuse his companion, and his success was so great, that before they had proceeded many miles, Michael interrupted him

by declaring, that if he made him laugh so immoderately, he should hardly keep Baiardo from stumbling in the road they were in.

"Well, then, Signor Gatzio," said Morgante, "I will tell you no more stories of Father Laurence and the Count, till the way be smoother; but I may sing you a song, I suppose. There is nothing makes a road so long, as keeping silence. If I have nothing else to do, I must set about counting how many times your Baiardo's feet go, knock, knock, knock, between tavern and tavern, and think how tedious that would be."

Without waiting for any answer to this proposal, Morgante began to carol forth some stanzas of a true love ditty, with all the strength of his clear shrill voice, and so intent was he in singing, and his comrade in listening to him, that a stranger, who was following almost at their horse's heels, continued to do so for some time, without being perceived by either of them. At length, the boy having paused to take breath, the sound of the hoofs behind caught his ear,

and, making a considerable exertion that his tiny fist might be felt in the soldier's back, he induced him at last to turn his head.

On doing so, Michael perceived a horseman, who, though not wearing the dress of a soldier, was conspicuously, and rather ostentatiously, armed at all points. This person, on receiving Michael's civil salutation, pushed forward to his side, and entered into conversation.

"Have you still far to ride, my friend?" said he: "that cloud looks threatening, and it will be well if we can get under shelter of those chestnuts yonder, before it bursts upon us."

Michael, who had really been too well amused to think of the weather, now looked about him, and perceived that they had truly a good chance of being wetted to the skin.

"Hold fast, boy," said he to Morgante, "Christina's little wine-house is not a stone's throw off the road, and we will stop there; I was doubting between that and old Carlo's, which is a league further, for our night's lodg-

but that cloud will, I think, settle my
."

few heavy drops began to fall, and the two
trotted out together, as if by common
nt, to save themselves from the flood which
bout to fall. By the good-will, both of the
and their beasts, they arrived before the
of Christina, just as a tremendous clap of
er announced that the storm was arrived in
earnest. Having recommended Morgante
e care of the bright-eyed hostess, Michael
is horse to the rude stable that leant against
side of her dwelling, and found his new
inrance already there, busy in attendance
s beast.

"We are in luck, signor," said he; "the rain
like the stream at Tivoli; two minutes of
would be just enough to wet us to the

"It will not last," replied the stranger; "a
er-storm rides the wind, and stays not
r in the same place; I shall not take my
from the saddle; there is still good time

this evening for another league or two. your purpose to put up here for the night.

"Perhaps I may do so; it will depend on the light that shall be left, when the day ceases. At all events, signor, we shall do our best to comfort ourselves, while we stay, with the cheer that Christina can afford us."

"You say well, friend; if we order our supper together, be sure we shall fare the better for it."

"I willingly consent to that," replied Michel. "and the more so, because, travelling as I do for the service of the church, I am as able as any man am willing, to pay for the best."

Having made such arrangements as the circumstances permitted, for the accommodation of their horses, they entered the house together. Morgante, with his usual adroitness, was already far advanced in the favour of Christina; he had not only completed the laying out of her supper-table, but not to mention the having turned the cake from the hearth, and drained the water from the salad.

"There will be no need, comrade," said Michael, observing the active preparations that were going forward, "for us to trouble ourselves about ordering supper, for our good Christina here is getting it ready for us, without any orders at all. This is not the first time I have seen how handy Christina can be; is it, signora? This will not be the first good supper that I have eaten in your house."

The young woman, who was very handsome, answered civilly, that she hoped it would not be the last; but as she said this, Morgante fancied he saw a smile of intelligence pass between her and the stranger who had overtaken them on the road.

A comfortable supper was placed before them in a very few minutes, and a jug of better wine accompanied it, than could have been expected from the appearance of the house. Morgante was as gay as a lark, and the honest-hearted Michael hardly less so. The stranger, too, though he seemed not of so cheerful a temperament, appeared willing to encourage the mirth

of the little party, by causing their attentive hostess to replenish the jug of wine.

“Do you remember, Christina, the odd adventure that befel my saddle-bags, the last time I baited here?” said Michael.

Christina did not hear him; she was at that moment particularly engaged in attending to the cooking of some eggs, which were to complete the repast.

“’Twas a queer chance that, signor,” continued Michael, addressing the stranger, “as you ever happened to hear of—we were sitting here, a party of three of us, just as we may be now—and I had put my little saddle-bags down on that very bench there under the window—no soul ever went near them—in truth, no one but our good Christina here, was in the room. Well, signor, as soon as we had finished our dinner, for it was dinner we were eating then, I well remember, I got up to take my saddle-bags, and be off, for I was going a long way farther that night. But lo! when I looked on the bench, no bags could I see.—The place was hunted

high and low, up and down, in doors, and out doors—when just as I was going to ride back to Ancona in despair, somebody came running out to me to the stable, saying that my saddle-bags were just exactly where I had put them—and so they were, sure enough—and glad enough was I when I found them, for they contained dispatches of prodigious importance to some of the Cardinals, or to the Pope himself—I have taken care not to get such another fright, for now I have my dispatches fastened up safely in the bosom of my buff jacket.”

Again the sharp eye of Morgante caught the look of intelligence, as it passed between Christina and the stranger; and it happened that he perfectly understood it. At the moment that he was about to mount his pillion for this expedition, the Abbess had sent for him, and made him understand, that it was highly probable her courier might be stopped on the road—that such accidents had frequently occurred, and that it appeared, from many circumstances, that the only motive for these detentions, was to obtain an

opportunity of examining her dispatches. On the present occasion, haste, as he well knew, was more important than all else, and therefore it was desirable, if any such circumstance occurred, rather to assist, than impede this object. To her courier it was, of course, impossible to give such instructions, but she earnestly desired Morgante to keep this in his mind, and to act accordingly.

Thus instructed, it was not difficult for the boy to divine the meaning of the looks, which he had remarked, between Christina and the stranger horseman; but it was much more so to discover any means of obeying the Abbess's parting instructions. Michael's announcement, that his dispatches were secured upon his person, was at least as embarrassing to Morgante, as it could be to any person whose object it was to examine them.

Unfortunately too, the thunder-storm had completely passed away, and Michael had declared his intention of proceeding, so that the chance of the papers being examined where they

then were, during the night, was lost;—and to put off this operation (which he felt perfectly certain was to take place) till their next halt, might, he thought, throw the business into the hands of less agreeable assistants than the fair Christina.

These considerations took no long time in passing through the brain of Morgante, and it struck him that the only method of obtaining his object, would be, to give the stranger an opportunity of coming to the point at once.

With this view, he affected to feel the exhilarating effects of the wine; pretended to replenish his cup sily; sang, prattled, and jested, till not only Christina and Michael, but even the grave stranger, laughed heartily.

When he saw that they were all persuaded that he was intoxicated, he began demurely to banter his fellow-traveller on the treasure he carried in his bosom.

“Ah, Signor Michael Gatzo,” said he, “are you not a silly fellow now, to tell us that you are carrying hidden mischief about you? Fie

upon it, Signor Gatzo——honest men, that carry honest letters, have no need to hide them in that fashion. I'll be bound it is some treason against the Pope, that you have got so cleverly concealed in your jerkin there——I can sing you a song about just such a trick as yours——”

“Stop, boy!” interrupted the stranger, “no more fooling——your wine hath doubtless made you speak the truth in this matter. Good fellow,” he continued, addressing Michael, “I should be sorry to treat you roughly, for you are a pleasant companion, and I am willing to hope, notwithstanding the strange hints of that young tippler there, an honest man to boot——but look you——I must examine those same letters you carry——I have a warrant for it.”

“A warrant to see my letters, friend?——that warrant lies in your sword, as I take it, and my licence for resistance lies in mine.”

So saying, he arose from the table, and seized upon his heavy weapon, which he had laid aside on sitting down.

“Now, friend,” said Michael composedly,

"I am quite ready to try which is the better man."

"This willingness to commence a broil, good fellow, is hardly seemly in one who professes to be in the service of the church; but I hardly think you will push the business so far, when—you look at this."

As he spake, he drew forth a parchment bound with black, to which was appended a seal bearing a cross, an olive branch, and a sword; the well known symbol of the Inquisition.

Morgante screamed, and ran behind Christina. Michael looked grave, and put up his sword.

"Now hear the words inscribed on this scroll," said the stranger solemnly:—"To all whom it may concern—this holy seal gives warning, that the bearer has our authority, power, and command——"

"Enough, enough, holy sir," cried Michael, pulling out the Abbess's packet from his bosom, "read and examine, in the name of God, and all his saints; I have no fear that you will find any thing in the writing of the reverend lady

I serve, that will not redound to her honour and glory."

The stranger received the packet, and deliberately opening it, read through, with great attention, the various letters it contained. Having perused that which related to Morgante, he called him from the place he had chosen to take behind Christina, and looking at him attentively said—

"Are you the boy recommended to sing in the private chapel of the Vatican?"

"I know not well, reverend sir," replied the boy, affecting terror he was far from feeling, "where I am to sing—her most reverend highness the Abbess of Sant' Catherina's, as your most reverend eminence hath doubtless discovered by those letters, doth greatly honour and favour me; and for that reason, it is her wish that I should exercise my small talent for singing, where it may serve to help me in the church, to whose service, holy sir, I have been devoted from my birth."

"Let me hear you sing—Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus, Dominus Deus Sabaoth,—young sir."

If it were, as is probable, the intention of this person to entrap the boy, by requiring him to do something he had never learned, he was altogether defeated; for the strength and art, with which the little fellow made those solemn words ring through the humble abode of Christina, startled all who heard him.

"The Abbess of Sant' Catherina's makes no bad present to his holiness, when she sends your voice, youngster—nevertheless, she might have found fitting preferment for you, nearer home.—But though you sing well, you are a sorry jester. I grieve my friend," he continued, addressing Michael, "that the wild words of this urchin should have obliged me to an act, seemingly so uncourteous—but, serving so godly a lady, you must know, how precious are the interests of the church to her faithful servants, and will readily excuse an offence occasioned by such a motive."

"Doubt it not, holy sir," said Michael respectfully, "I know my duty too well, to find any thing amiss that comes from that quarter.

If this young hair-brain run me into any more such straits, I hope it will be to put me in the hands of such worthy gentlemen as yourself."

Morgante, who appeared perfectly sobered by the adventure, now addressed himself to his good-humoured conductor, and made many apologies for the malapert gaiety, to which the good wine had given rise.

"You must trust me no more with the wine-cup, Signor Michael, or you may catch me saying something more wicked and irreverent still. Good Father Laurence always bade me to beware of wine,—and now I have seen, to my cost, how well he knew me. I hope, Signor Michael, you will ride on a league or two farther to-night; my poor head rings with the noise I have been making: never trust me with the wine-cup again, Signor Michael."

It was quite beyond the strength of the gay-hearted soldier to preserve any displeasure against so penitent an offender, and immediately consenting to his wish of pursuing their

journey, he prepared his horse, paid his reckoning, and took his leave, greatly to the satisfaction of his impatient companion.

As this was the only adventure of any importance which befel our travellers on the road, it is not necessary to dwell longer on the journey. They reached Rome on the evening of the fifth day, without a word of complaint from Morgante, but not without his having suffered considerably from the fatigue their forced marches occasioned him.


The boy appeared before the exalted personage to whom he was sent, but greatly to the zealous churchman's disappointment, he had so completely lost his voice, that his chaunt was more like that of a raven, than of a Christian chorister. The boy, moreover, appeared to be fretful, sickly, and unmanageable, so that he obtained permission to remain with an aunt who lived at Rome, till his voice should recover from the ill effects of his journey. In a word, all difficulties disappeared before his able generalship, and the day but one after his arrival at

Rome, he quitted it again in company with Jacintha Corri and her son.

As this son had not been included in the message brought by Morgante, he stated his fear that his going might not be approved, but was instantly silenced by the tone in which Jacintha answered—

“Would you hinder her foster brother, boy, from stretching out his arm to help her? Where will you find one, who would do what he would do, and suffer what he would suffer, rather than one hair of our Camilla’s head should be rudely severed.”

“Then let him come, in God’s name,” answered the boy; “could he see her as I have seen her, his heart would yearn to help her, even were she a stranger.”



CHAPTER XXIV.

What good is covered by the face of heaven,
To be discovered, that can do me good ?

SHAKSPEARE.

THE day fixed by the Abbot, for giving the habit of a novice to Juliet arrived. The interval had been carefully employed by Geraldine in strengthening the belief, now general among her nuns, that sister Camilla was insane. The unhappy countess was herself prepared to confirm the report, by her answers to any questions the Abbot might put to her ; and the only difficulty was, for the superior to sanction this opinion by her own, yet not to speak of it so positively as to suggest the necessity of immediate medical advice, or any extraordinary restraint.

Immediately on the arrival of Isidore, the nuns prepared for the ceremony, which is always hailed as a festival among them, though it is the first step towards condemning a fellow-creature to the same state in which they are themselves languishing. The firmness of Juliet was well sustained throughout. The last words of her aunt, as they parted to take their different places in the procession to the chapel, were—“*Fear nothing,*”—and these were sufficient to neutralize the feeling of terror, which the ceremony was well calculated to inspire.

A collation in the refectory, on the decoration of which many of the nuns had employed themselves, from the time the day was announced, followed the ceremony; and here, as is usual on such occasions, the honours of the day, were all for the new novice. Her place at table was between the stately Abbot, and her own superior, and every eye was turned upon her, as the heroine of the hour.

As soon as the repast was ended, the Abbot, as usual, signified his intention of receiving in

the parlour any of the community who might wish to converse with him, either on their own affairs or those of the establishment.

But few availed themselves of this privilege on the present occasion, and these were entirely from among the elder nuns; the younger ones preferring to enjoy in the garden the additional liberty permitted at this festival, to the honour of conversing with their dignified visitor in the parlour.

One of the duties most universally recognised in all convents, is the bringing before their visitor every thing at all out of the common way, which takes place in the establishment; and, in conformity to this, not one of the recluses who accepted the Abbot's invitation, failed to make mention of the unhappy state of mind, in which they imagined sister Camilla to be. After these conferences were over, (at which the Abbess is seldom present, inasmuch as complaints against herself, and her management, may sometimes chance to form one of the subjects brought forward,) the Abbot desired that

the superior would do him the honour of admitting him to an interview in her private sitting-room.

This was what Geraldine expected, and was prepared for. He began the conversation by inquiring concerning the health of sister Camilla, which, if he remembered rightly, she had mentioned to him, as being in an infirm state.

"Her bodily health, my lord," replied the Abbess, "is, I think, better than at her first arrival here; but I am sorry to say that I have great doubts, as to whether her mind be in such a state as to render her remaining with us possible."

"You wish to dismiss her, holy mother?"

"Not so, my lord; on the contrary, it would give me the greatest pleasure, could our gentle treatment, and constant care, avail to restore her—but I fear——"

"That such a cure would exceed your power, holy mother; and that you would, therefore, wish to place her in other hands?"

"Should she, my lord, after a tender and

patient experiment of some weeks, continue as she has done since my return, to give decided indications of mental aberration, I certainly think that, for all our sakes, it would be better that she should be removed. Though her name and family have never been mentioned to me, I think your lordship told me that she was nobly born, and highly connected. It can hardly be doubted, that her friends would themselves wish to take charge of her."

The Abbot fixed his searching eyes stedfastly on the face of Geraldine; but she had been too long accustomed to struggle against that look, to quail before it.

"May I see this unfortunate woman?"

"Certainly, my lord.—I would wish you to do so; by so doing, you will be able to judge much better than from any description I can give of her real condition."

"That may be very true, holy mother; and I would willingly form my judgment on the surest possible grounds, before I decide on what must be done with her."

The Abbess summoned a nun, who was waiting in attendance in a neighbouring cell, and desired her to bring sister Camilla to her room.

"Is there any chance that she will resist your command, holy mother?" said the Abbot.

"Not the least, my lord. No one can be more docile and obedient than this poor Camilla, and it is this which leads me sometimes to hope that, by gentle treatment, we may succeed in restoring her. I should not be surprised to hear that she had been exposed to great severity, or violent mental suffering of some kind or other."

Isidore again regarded her fixedly.

A moment after, the nun who had been sent for her, returned, leading Camilla by the hand.

The Abbot sat silently gazing at her, as she advanced from the door to the place where he was stationed. Life and death were at stake, as she thus exposed herself alone and unsheltered to his eye. She felt this in every throbbing vein; she felt, too, that it was not her life alone that must pay the forfeit, if she succeeded not in

ling what every sensation made her conscious must be so easily perceived.

Aldine was awake to all this, and suffered less than the unfortunate Camilla herself; she sustained her presence of mind until. When half-way across the chamber, the trembling victim stopped short, and, though for a moment she had not the slightest recollection of the part assigned her to play, her countenance expressed so much wild agony, that the abbess skilfully availed herself of it, and, gently pushing a chair towards her, seated her on it, saying, in a calm and cautious tone of voice, such as would naturally be used in addressing a disturbed intellect—

"Compose yourself, dear daughter. This good Abbot is a friend of mine. Sister Maria will like to see a friend of mine."

As she said this, she bent over her, and took her hand, which she pressed with an action so gentle, though imperceptible, as at once to recall her to herself; and, with a mixture of truth

and art, that brought tears to the eyes of Geraldine, she answered,—

“ Friend?——I have no friend.”

“ God will be your friend, my daughter,” said the Abbot, still examining her with the most earnest attention, —“ God and the holy Virgin will befriend you—if you deserve it.”

“ I will, sir,” replied poor Camilla, still sustaining her part, more by yielding to her agitation, than by affecting any thing foreign to the real state of her mind.

“ Let me hear you converse with her, holy mother,” said Isidore.

“ Did you see our new novice take the habit?” said the Abbess, still pressing her hand strongly.

“ Did I see it?” she replied, looking up in the face of Geraldine;—“ No, I saw nothing.”

“ Does the light hurt your eyes, to-day, my daughter?” inquired the Abbess, drawing her veil forward;—“ She complains much of this, my lord.”

"That can have no connexion, I presume, with mental derangement?" he replied. "You do wrong, holy mother, by enveloping her face and person thus completely; you deprive me of the power of judging of her condition by her general air and appearance."

The Abbess, who still held the hand of Camilla, felt her tremble so violently, that she began to fear the most fatal result from this scene; and thinking that the most likely means of bringing it to a conclusion, would be leading her to express herself with vehemence, she said abruptly, "Sister Camilla, it is necessary that my lord Abbot here should know exactly how you are, both in mind and body. If you feel ill, my daughter—tell him so. If you are unhappy—let him know it. It is only by knowing your condition, that he can afford you relief."

It was evident that this speech surprised and puzzled Isidore. For the first time since she had entered, he withdrew his eyes from the face of Camilla, and fixed them on Geraldine. She rejoiced at this, as a relief to the unhappy crea-

ing herself; "no nun of mine shall be supported in the arms of a man, were he a hundred times the Abbot of St. Andrea—I doubt not but I can myself sustain her, till the faintness passes." While saying this, Geraldine exerted a degree of strength which she was unconscious of possessing, and raising the insensible Camilla from her chair, she let her sink gently to the ground, then knelt beside her, and, while rubbing her hands and chafing her pale temples, concealed her person more completely than any other attitude could have permitted.

The danger was past—and the Abbess raised her eyes, again radiant with hope, to Isidore. She was about to utter some civil words of apology for the vehemence she had betrayed, when the sight of his countenance stopped, and almost petrified her—for a sneer of hatred, scorn, and defiance, met her glance, which carried instant conviction to her heart, that he suspected the truth.

He probably saw the effect he had produced, for he instantly endeavoured to efface it.

“It is evident, holy mother, that there is nothing the matter here, beyond a little female weakness: I will leave you, and should any symptoms appear, which you deem it proper I should be acquainted with, fail not to let me know it, and I will immediately take measures that proper medical assistance shall be procured for her.”

So saying, he uttered a blessing, which to the ears of Geraldine sounded like a curse, and departed.

It would be difficult to conceive a situation of more agonizing doubt and fear, than that in which he left the Abbess of Sant' Catherina's. She felt perfectly convinced that he suspected the truth; but thought that, could she achieve the escape of Camilla before her situation was known to the community, it would be out of the power of Isidore to prove that she had ever been made acquainted with it. But how was this escape to be effected? A day's delay might be fatal; yet when she looked at the death-like figure which lay before her, and recollected that to place her alone, unprotected, and helpless, beyond the

convent walls, was the very farthest extent to which her power went, Geraldine clasped her hands together in the bitterness of grief, and exclaimed,—“ We are lost !”

Camilla, whose senses were sufficiently returned to understand the full meaning of these fearful words, lay for some moments longer without giving any sign of having heard them; then raising herself from the ground, she addressed the Abbess with the hard firmness of despair.

“ All then is over with me. I submit to my fate—the struggle is past—you will hear me complain no more. But no one,” she continued, while a shivering tremor ran through her frame, “ no one, but my babe, shall suffer with me.—Make no farther effort—it must be vain—express no regret, no pity—it must be useless.—Let me go to my cell, and I will lie there till they carry me to ——”

She did not finish the sentence, but rising with a composure that was frightfully unnatural, walked towards the door.

The Abbess followed her.

“ You shall not go with me,” said Camilla, turning suddenly round. “ As long as there was a chance of saving Mondello’s child, I was willing you should risk something—but now—look at me for the last time, Geraldine—and let no one, but the God of Mercy know that you have pitied me.”

She left the room, and the Abbess, too intently occupied in weighing the possibility of saving her, to think of her present weakness, let her go alone.

Geraldine paced the room in feverish anxiety; innumerable plans, rejected as soon as conceived, for all were alike impossible, chased each other through her aching head. Three days only had elapsed since the departure of Morgante, and it was beyond hope that he should return with Jacintha in less than ten; though, among the other injunctions impressed upon his memory at parting, one the most dwelt on was, that no gold or strength should be spared to expedite their return. Jacintha was to travel as the wife of a rich merchant, coming to Ancona to await

the return of her husband from an English voyage; which character would enable her to take a passage for herself and Camilla for any port in England, under pretence of joining him there.

But Geraldine no longer felt a hope, that it would be possible to put off the dreaded discovery till her arrival. The Abbot might return on the morrow to examine into her condition; and before he came, it was probable her real state would be known to every member of the community.

While still vainly torturing herself to find means of escaping the misery now pressing so closely upon her, the Abbess suddenly heard an unusual noise at the farther end of the passage which led to her door; steps were passing hastily, and many voices were to be distinguished in loud parley.

Trembling lest this unusual tumult should have some connexion with the subject that occupied her thoughts, she hastily left her room,

and, guided by the noise, which still continued, she hurried towards the spot from whence it came; and in a moment a scene met her view, which left her nothing farther to fear. On the floor, where she had sunk, from a return of faintness, lay Camilla; her dress loosened to give her air, and her whole person exposed to the gaze of twenty or thirty nuns, who stood apart, as if afraid to touch her, and whose number was increasing every moment. These women were on either side; but, directly before her, and close to her feet, stood the Abbot of St. Andrea's, with his eyes fixed upon her, as if fearful that, should he remove them, he might lose his prey.

A murmur among the nuns announced the approach of the Abbess, Isidore turned his head, but remained silent, till she was close beside him—then pointing with his finger to Camilla, who was again awakening to the misery of consciousness, he said—

“ If you will look upon this woman now, holy

mother, you will no longer be perplexed, in the manner you just now expressed yourself to be, respecting the cause of her indisposition."

Every eye was turned upon the Abbess as he spoke ; but she was no longer the trembling woman that the struggle between hope and fear had lately made her ; she was at once restored to the most perfect composure ; and the commanding dignity of her person and manner never appeared more conspicuously, than when she replied to the Abbot,—

"This sight, my lord, is equally dreadful and unexpected. The punishment and shame of this unhappy creature must rest upon herself ; but the scandal is with those who have dared to profane these walls by sending her within them. I may live to see them repent it."

Then turning towards the crowd of nuns, she waved her hand and said—

"Retire, my children ; this is no sight for you. Go each of you to your cells, and, on your bended knees, repeat aloud—'Miserere mei, Deus,' and 'Domine, exaudi meam.'——"

You, sisters Marcella and Agatha, remain with me."

In a moment the gallery was cleared of all but the two elderly women, to whom she had addressed herself. When they were out of sight, she said to these—

"Cover that woman's person—it is offensive to decency."—Then turning to Isidore, she continued,—“My lord Abbot, what is your will respecting her? Though my rule has been too happy to have taught me experience in such a case as this, yet all analogy shows clearly that it must be your office to decide how she shall be disposed of.”

“You say right, holy mother—that office is mine. Touch her not!” he exclaimed, holding up his arm in an attitude of denunciation to Marcella, who, having assisted Agatha in arranging her dress, was endeavouring to place her in an attitude less painful than that in which she had fallen. “Touch her not! Call hither the lay menials of your kitchen—they shall bear her to a cell not lately used.”

The Abbess stood silently observant of his orders. He turned to her with an air of mock respect, and said, "I cannot enough rejoice, holy mother, that my having returned to make known my purpose of visiting you again to-morrow, has saved you the cruel embarrassment of making this horrible discovery, when you had no official authority near to direct your proceedings. I am sure you must be thankful for this."

The Abbess bowed in silence.

"Perhaps, holy mother, you are altogether ignorant of what the church ordains in such cases?"

"Such cases, my lord, are the last which the superior of such an establishment as this, would find it necessary to study."

"Assuredly; yet such is the depravity of human nature, that the church has found it needful to fix and define the punishment to be inflicted on crimes such as this, however impossible it may seem to the female saints of our holy religion that such should ever occur."

"If this be so, my lord," replied Geraldine, preserving always her look and voice of unshrinking firmness, "your lordship will be spared the painful task of deciding what that punishment must be."

"You have known me so long, holy mother, that I should have thought you might have been aware, that no task is painful to me, which is imposed by the sacred duties of religion. God has not left me, in this age of heresy, with a heart so soft, as to make me suffer when I do his bidding. No, holy mother, I shall stand by and watch the building up the wall, that shall inclose that creature from the air of life, as cheerfully as any other sacred duty, which it is the will of God I should perform."

As he uttered these dreadful words, the servants he had sent for appeared. He ordered them to carry Camilla in their arms to the place where he would lead them. Four stout-looking women had obeyed his call; and, by his orders, raised the wretched Camilla in their arms: he stepped forward to marshal their steps; and as

he did so, turned to the Abbess, with punctilious politeness, and said—

“Though my duty obliges me to take the management of this solemn business upon myself, holy mother, it is my wish that no part of it, which properly appertains to your own high office, should be omitted; wherefore, I will beg of you to witness the incarceration of this criminal in the prison-vault of this building.”

“My lord Abbot,” said Geraldine, “though but a weak and ignorant woman, vested with no greater authority than belongs to the humble Abbess of Sant’ Catherina’s, I do forbid these women to convey the nun, Camilla, one step towards the prison-vault of this convent. Carry her to her own cell, Ursula,” she continued, addressing one of the women who bore her, “lay her with all gentleness upon her bed; then lock the door of the room, and bring the key to my parlour, where you will find me.”

Isidore stood thunderstruck. The women, unchecked by any word from him, obeyed with

alacrity the voice which, for years, had been listened to within those walls, as omnipotent; and they were already gone, before the Abbot had sufficiently recovered himself to speak.

"You are doubtless prepared to answer this before the council, Abbess of Sant' Catherina's?" said he, at length, struggling to subdue the rage that almost mastered him.

"I am, my lord Abbot—and perhaps we may be told, that it was well one of the two, who are in authority here, preserved sufficient calmness at this moment to insure the course of lawful judgment, by guarding the person of the criminal from all chance of escaping it, as well by death, as by any other mode of evasion."

Having said this, Geraldine walked away, without waiting for a reply; nor did Isidore follow to make one. The consciousness that she was right, and must be acknowledged, in case of appeal to the highest authority, to be so, added another sting to his envenomed spirit; and it was only by recalling the mass of evidence that he

had already collected against this object of his long cherished hatred, that he could regain that appearance of dignified composure, which so few circumstances had ever been able to ruffle.

CHAPTER XXV.

Nos prêtres ne sont point ce qu'un vain peuple pense.

VOLTAIRE.

*Letter from the Abbess of Sant' Catherina's
to Lord Arlborough.*

“FOR many years, my dear kinsman, you have been in vain urging me to take a step which an accident has now decided me to do. There has been ever too much risk attending our intercourse, from the possibility of letters being intercepted, for me at any time to have given you fully my reasons for refusing what offered so much to tempt me. It was sufficient for me to tell you, that I conceived it my duty to refuse

the happiness proposed me; and little as you could have appreciated my motives, you have done me the kindness to believe that they were honourable. The time approaches when we may hope to know each other more intimately, and I have little fear of finding that our judgments differ. This letter, with neither address nor signature, can endanger no one, but if it reaches you, it will be by the hand of one, for whom I earnestly intreat your active friendship. Let the caution I use in this matter, teach you full confidence in my discretion respecting another, in which you are more tenderly concerned,—on this point, I have never trusted any human being with the knowledge of what might have endangered the safety of those dear to you—though this reserve has, in one instance, been very painful to me. I trust that this will reach you, in time to prevent the danger of a second expedition. I cannot come to you unaccompanied; and the friend I shall bring, will, I think, induce you to conclude the arrangement I wish, more readily than any negociation could

lead you to do. The bearer of this, as well as the friend who, I trust, will still be with you when you receive it, can explain who this dear companion will be.—Farewell.”

To write this letter was the first occupation of Geraldine, upon shutting herself into her room after the scene described in the last chapter; and its tone of assured confidence in her power of achieving what she was bent to perform, will convey a correct idea of the state of her mind.

There are many people who falter and tremble, as long as there is any mixture of doubt in their minds, as to what they can, or what they ought to do, but who, the moment that doubt ceases, have power and will to dare every thing. It was thus with Geraldine. As long as she had believed that it might bring persecution and danger to her family, and unhappiness, nay, perhaps in their case, danger too, on the nuns who for so many years had obeyed and loved her, the Abbess of Sant’

Catherina's resisted the repeated solicitations of her noble English cousin, to leave a station which he knew was repugnant to her principles, and find a home in the country and family of her mother. She had refused this, because it appeared to her, that she only could be the gainer by it, while many others might pay the penalty ; but now the case was altered. Determined at every risk to save the Countess of Mondello from the fate which threatened her, and aware that she could no longer hope to do this, without exposing herself, and perhaps poor Juliet also, to strong suspicion, she decided at once upon taking refuge in England, and carrying her adopted child with her.

More lost to her father, Juliet could not be, than in the situation he had himself chosen for her ; on this point, therefore, the Abbess was tormented by no scruples ; nor could she be said, at the moment of writing this letter, to feel one pang of doubt as to the result of the plan she had formed.

Her authority was still unshaken; and her resources were so great, that her prompt and active spirit, contemplated no obstacle that could be sufficient to impede her success.

In all cases, any way approaching in importance to that of Camilla, it was usual to summon a chapter of the heads of such religious establishments of the same order, as were near enough to permit their attending.

Though this was always done as speedily as possible, after the discovery of the crime, and the seizure of the criminal, Geraldine knew, that such a council as was held necessary, could not be assembled on the morrow. The interval of one day must of necessity intervene, and this was sufficient to give her time for the execution of her purpose. The chamber wherein this council must assemble, according to the ancient usage of the convent, was a small vaulted room of black marble, situated at the western extremity of the chapel. This room, as poor Geraldine was wont to boast, had never been used since

she had become Abbess of Sant' Catherina's, and some preparation was necessary to render it fit for the reception of the chapter.

It was on this circumstance that the first part of her scheme was founded. A provision of tapestry, carpets, and matting, such as were always required upon such occasions, were, together with the tools necessary for arranging them, kept in the lumber-room, through which the Abbess had led Juliet when she took her upon the terrace. The door of this room, when left open, as it naturally would be for a few hours, for the egress, and regress of the people to be employed, would afford opportunity for Camilla, either in going or returning from chapel (an attendance on which was never denied to any culprit before condemnation) to gain access to the terrace. To escape from thence, however, without assistance from without, would be utterly impossible; and it was the purpose of the Abbess, that she should conceal herself within the door leading to the belfry, from the hour of vesper service till midnight, when she would herself

—at all risk of discovery—lead her through the great gate of the convent, the court before it, and the last barrier which opened from this, by an arched door-way, connecting the porter's lodging with some other offices of the building. That they might be seen, intercepted, and brought back together, to certain death, was a chance far from being improbable, but on which, as it must be hazarded, Geraldine wasted not a single thought. In the hope of turning suspicion from the truth, she intended that Camilla's veil should be found caught by the balustrade of the terrace, to suggest the idea that she might have drowned herself, to avoid the more terrible death with which she was threatened.

Having thus far arranged her plan, the Abbess sent for Juliet, whose pale face and tearful eye showed plainly, that she had already learnt the discovery that had taken place.

As soon as they were alone, Juliet's agony of terror, as well for her aunt, as for Camilla, burst forth in words; but the Abbess listened to her, answered her, and reasoned with her—all

with an air of such steady firmness, that she conceived a degree of hope, which, a few moments before, she believed beyond the reach of possibility.

Having thus rendered Juliet sufficiently calm to listen with the attention necessary to make her an efficient assistant in the perilous undertaking before them, the Abbess proceeded to explain to her all the details, by which she hoped to bring it to a happy issue.

“Poor Camilla is so tall, Juliet, that we shall find some difficulty in arranging your clothes for her—and yet, perforce, it must be from such as you brought with you, that she must be dressed.”

“I will instantly set about it, in my cell. God forgive the hypocrisy, but if I lock my door it must pass for my wish to pray alone after the ceremony of this morning. But, dearest aunt! how is Camilla to exist outside these walls? Where can she dare present herself, to ask for shelter or even for food?”

“You will think my policy very daring,

Juliet, when I tell you.—but trust me, such policy is always safest—it must be at the gate of the convent that she shall receive her food. At two o'clock, as I believe you know, all the poor of Ancona throng round our gates to receive what has been left from our dinner-tables. It is among these, that Camilla must hide herself—and that for the very reason which makes you look at me now with such astonishment. You would not have thought of her being there—nor will any one else. Be careful, therefore, in preparing the dress that is to cover her, that you give it as sordid and miserable an appearance as possible;—and now leave me, dearest—set about this work immediately. Close your door carefully—I need not bid you be diligent, my Juliet. Be not uneasy, if you do not see me for an hour or two—I have much to do. First, I must see our poor Camilla, and endeavour to inspire her with courage to endure the terror of begging her bread at our gates, and the misery of passing more than one houseless night before her nurse arrives. When that

happens, her sufferings will be changed for joy.—Farewell, my child—as you employ your hands for this good cause, lift your heart to Heaven, Juliet, and pray for a blessing on it.”

The Abbess found Camilla perfectly composed, though without the shadow of a hope that she could avoid the fate which she had long anticipated, and which she had just heard the man, who must be her judge, pronounce upon her.

As Geraldine proceeded to explain her plan, her hopes, and her expectations, the calmness of Camilla gave way. An expression of anxiety, dreadfully intense, again almost convulsed her features; but for many minutes she continued to listen in silence. At length, when the brief but clear explanation of the Abbess ended at the expected arrival of Jacintha, and the means by which she could earliest be made acquainted with it, she passionately exclaimed—

“For the love of God rouse not such hopes within me, if there be much doubt mixed with it. I have taken leave of life—I am ready to

suffer all that man can invent to torture me—and if I feel my infant die within me, I will take joy to my heart, that it is not conscious of the pangs of death. Oh, then, be very cautious how you make me hope.—There is so much to make me doat on life.—To reach Mondello—my dear, noble husband—to shew him his young child—to—”

“Calm this vehemence of feeling, dear Camilla, or all I can do must be in vain;” said the Abbess, rising to leave her. “Did I not myself feel confident that I have still the power to save you, I would not hazard all I do—still less would I be guilty of the cruelty you so naturally deprecate. Much, however, must depend upon yourself. Arouse all your strength of mind—I am sure you possess much—and remember that much more than your own safety will now hang on your success. I will order your supper to be brought you—and after this, which will be the last visit any of the household will make you for the night, I will bring hither the dress that Juliet is preparing. I must then, as

much as possible, avoid speaking to you, lest our voices should be heard, therefore let me now confide this letter to your care—it is without signature or address, for fear of accidents, but forget not, that it is for the Lord Arlborough—the name is address sufficient, if you can reach England. There is no part of it, where you could not learn where you may find my honoured uncle. Do you think you can remember this name?”

“Fear it not, my generous friend;—and for yourself?—Is there no danger?”

“You must not spare a single thought for me, dear child,” replied the Abbess, embracing her. “If you manage well, I shall have little to fear.—One word more—and I must leave you. Remember, that should you shrink from the daily visit which I recommend to the gate of this convent, you must at least not omit it on Friday, Sunday, and the Wednesday following. On these days, some of the community appear themselves to assist the servants in waiting on the poor—Juliet will be among them—it is she who

must find means to give you tidings of Jacintha, —who, as we have every reason to hope, will surely be in Ancona before the last day I have named.”

Geraldine then left her, to give orders for the summons which must be dispatched to the Abbess of St. Ildefonse, at Ancona, and to the Abbot of St. Sebastiano, at a few miles’ distance from it; both being of the order of Dominicans, requesting their attendance at noon on the day after the morrow. She also, according to the usual form, addressed a notification to the same effect to the Abbot of St. Andrea, giving him notice of the day and hour which she had fixed for the trial of the nun Camilla.

Having completed this business, which, in conformity to her usual system, had neither prevented her attendance at vespers, nor the appearing in the refectory at supper, she sat quietly beside her solitary lamp till every sound had ceased, and till, by the regulations of the convent, which, by her firm but gentle rule, she had rendered immutable, she felt assured that

every inhabitant of the convent was retired to rest. Yet still she lingered in her room, anxious to give every partaker in the various emotions of that weary day full time to forget their share of it in sleep. As the chapel clock struck eleven, she arose, and carefully placed such a shade upon her lamp, as would prevent its glaring through a window or a key-hole, and yet, by a slight movement, be removed at pleasure. Thus prepared, she quitted her parlour, and glided noiselessly along the passages which led to the cell of Juliet; that of Camilla, as was before stated, was next to it, but the corner of a gallery intervened between them. The door of Camilla's cell must be passed by the Abbess, before she reached that of Juliet, but she determined not to enter it, till she had obtained the garments prepared for her, as every added sound was an added danger. As she approached the cell, however, some idea that she might be watching for her, crossed the mind of Geraldine, and she paused immediately opposite to it, turning her

lamp at the same moment, so as to throw its full light upon the door.

Geraldine d'Albano did not faint,—she did not fall,—she did not scream ; but, with ten times greater suffering than those can feel, whose weaker natures yield to such relief, she stood immoveable, her eyes following the strong light of her lamp, which fell on two motionless figures in black, who were stationed at each side of Camilla's door.

One glance revealed the dreadful truth—they were officials of the Inquisition.

It needed no long meditation to enable her to comprehend the frightful mystery ; nor did her rapid interpretation vary in any important point from the real facts. Isidore was, as she had long suspected, an Inquisitor, and armed with that frightful power, which pervades every sanctuary, and makes its way unchallenged to the chamber of the monarch, or the more sacred cell of the devotee.

The Abbot had left Sant' Catherina's, bitterly

mortified by the check his authority had received in the presence of its menials; and not only bent more firmly than ever upon obtaining vengeance on the noble woman who had braved him, but keenly awake to the probability, that she would not suffer the interval so hardly obtained to pass away, without making a desperate effort to save Camilla. His plan for the prevention of this, was speedily formed; he hastened back, with the least possible delay, to St. Andrea's; and, selecting from among such of its retainers, as were in the service of the holy office, two whom he thought especially fitted for the business, he dispatched them to Sant' Catharina's, with orders to find their way to the door of Camilla's cell, and to remain there till their watch should be relieved by others, whom he should bring with him to the convent on the morrow.

Those to whom no information can be refused, and who can insure a silence on their deeds, deep as that of the grave, by merely showing an impression on wax, affixed to a scroll of parch-

ment for ever worn upon their persons, find little difficulty in executing any commission.

The Abbess passed on, bowing her head respectfully, and having paused in her progress for so brief a space, that the sable mutes who glared upon her, were hardly aware that she did so. Her purpose was at once decided. She proceeded to the door of Juliet's cell, and gave the appointed signal—the anxious girl opened it, and welcomed her with an affectionate, but timid smile. Geraldine set down her shaded lamp, and for one short moment concealed her face, and avoided to speak, lest her body might betray symptoms of weakness which her soul rejected.

“I am quite ready for you,” said Juliet in a low whisper, and at the same moment displaying the result of her assiduous industry—“every thing has long been still—let us go at once.”

“I have changed the plan, Juliet,” said the Abbess, in a tone which, spite of all the caution with which it was uttered, made her niece start. Without speaking in return, Juliet immediately moved the shade of the lamp, and threw its

strong light upon the face of her aunt. Had it not been colourless as death at such a moment, it could hardly have been that of a woman.

“Tell me all,”—were the only words of Juliet.

“I will to-morrow, dearest,” replied Geraldine, with the exertion of astonishing self-command. —“Meanwhile, fear nothing—I will convey these things to a place of safety—my purpose is but delayed.”

As she said this, she employed herself in making a parcel of the dress, which Juliet had prepared, and then laying a finger on her lips to indicate the necessity of silence, she kissed her cheek, and was about to quit her, when a frightful recollection made her turn back and say—“Do not leave your room to-morrow, till I come for you—and now, endeavour to sleep, my dearest Juliet.”

On leaving the cell, Geraldine returned to her own room, by walking the whole length of the novices' gallery, and descending from the farther end of it, by a small staircase, to a door, which

opened upon the great corridor of the floor below; thus avoiding the passage in which the cell of Camilla was situated.

On entering her own apartment, Geraldine laid aside the flowing garments which formed her usual dress, and taking her master-key from its place, she hastened with a firm but silent step, still carrying the lamp and the disguise prepared for Camilla, to the small room close to the chapel, through which she had led Juliet to the terrace. Here she deposited the parcel, concealing it in a manner which left but little danger of its being found by any one but herself, or some one instructed by her where to seek it.

Having done this, she entered the chapel, and advanced to a low iron door, situated in the wall of the north aisle. The building was placed on the southern angle of the little bay which forms the harbour of Ancona, and the north side of the chapel presented to the sea the terraced front before described. This iron door, to which now, for the first time, the Abbess applied her master-

key, gave entrance to a range of vaults, on whose arched roofs the terrace above was supported.

Their original purpose was either forgotten, or not generally known, and during the twenty years Geraldine had resided in the convent, they had been opened but once, which was for the purpose of gaining access to the sea-wall which fenced them from the Adriatic. This happened a few years after she had taken the veil, and was rendered necessary by a violent storm which had undermined a part of the foundation. The circumstance was impressed upon her mind by the whispered tales which nuns so love to listen to, although they send them trembling to their solitary cells.

Though spoken of with affected caution, it was pretty generally known throughout the convent, that the workmen, in making their way through these vaults, to that part of the outward wall which required repair, opened more than one of these awful tombs constructed for the living, which are but too well known to have existed in almost every convent throughout the catholic

world. How far the report of these men might be trusted, as to the number of bones found in these hideous recesses, is very doubtful; but it is certain, that notwithstanding the opprobrium resting on the memory of the wretched beings to whom they had belonged, the indecency of such relics being gazed at, and handled, was so revolting to the feelings of the good priest who had been appointed to superintend the repairs, that he obtained permission to have them collected and interred.

It was the recollection of this event which now led Geraldine to examine these gloomy recesses. It was no longer possible to doubt that Camilla would be condemned to that most terrible of all punishments—interment before death; and it could hardly be doubted that these vaults must be the scene where the frightful tragedy would be acted. To study their situation and construction, and to ascertain what facilities of access these afforded, was now the object of her anxious examination. The last remaining chance left for her was in the

possibility of conveying her away after the interment.

It was not immediately that the small lamp carried by Geraldine could enable her to distinguish the objects which presented themselves as she opened the door. The damp cold air that rushed past, very nearly extinguished the light, and, for a moment, she retreated, chilled and trembling—but not discouraged. After carefully examining the state of her lamp, and arranging the shade so as to protect it from the wind, she again went forward with a step as resolute as her purpose.

She found, as she expected, a range of arches corresponding to the external buttresses which faced the water. They were as many in number as the lance windows of the chapel, forming a line of twelve distinct vaults, connected with each other by the narrow passage upon which the door from the chapel opened.

By measuring the width of each of these dungeons, and comparing it with the entire length of the passage, she ascertained that the partition

walls which divided them were too thin to contain the cells whose position she was seeking to discover. It was therefore evident that these must be fabricated in the external wall, which faced the sea. Upon this she now fixed her attention; it was built with large rough hewn stones, cemented together with coarse mortar; but no fastenings, or iron work of any kind, were perceptible, and it appeared to her that one stout man, with proper tools, might, without difficulty, pull down a sufficient space of such masonry, when recently erected, in a very short space of time. That the sound of such an operation should be overheard was improbable, for several reasons; none of the rooms of the convent were near it, and the ceaseless sound of the waves lashing against the walls, would render it very difficult to distinguish any noise heard from that quarter.

Thus far the examination was satisfactory, as it had shown nothing which seemed to render the execution of the plan she meditated impossible, or even difficult; but while she rejoiced at

this, the train of lesser circumstances, which must all conspire in her favour before she could profit by it, came crowding to her recollection. Where should she find the arm so necessary to help her? Where could she attempt even to seek it, without exposing herself to almost certain destruction? How should she find the means of conveying to the wretched prisoner some word of comfort, that might sustain her through that mortal agony which must precede the desperate effort to save her?

As Geraldine stood pondering these fearful difficulties, the pressure upon her brain became almost intolerable, and gladly, at that moment, would she have purchased the safety she had promised to the unhappy Camilla, by laying down her own life without further struggle. But it was not so that this sacred promise could be performed; and shaking off the sickening despondency that threatened to master her resolution, she hastened to leave the dismal region which chilled her blood. On quitting the eternal darkness of the vaults, she was startled to see

the grey light of morning already stealing athwart the deep shadows of the chapel. She extinguished her lamp, and reached her room in safety.

And now, for the first time for many hours, she quietly sat down to think. The stillness of that moment was dreadful. The last words of Camilla, conjuring her not to rouse a false and futile hope of life within her, seemed ringing in her ears; and the immense, the various, the overwhelming difficulties of the enterprise she was resolved to undertake, in the hope of saving her, rose up like giants to give her battle. She could not hope to sleep, and the vainly attempting to do so would, as she well knew, more un-hinge her nerves than the most active work she could put them to. With this persuasion she abandoned all idea of rest, and employed the interval before the service of matins (which at Sant' Catherina's was performed at five o'clock) in arranging, with as much clearness of head as she could command, the chain of circumstances which she knew must follow each other during

the next two days. They were such as might appal the stoutest heart; and when she turned her consideration to the means that were within her reach, by which she might hope to avert their consequences, the disproportion of the remedy to the evil was so obvious, as almost to paralyze every effort. That such would have been the result of this bitter hour's meditation, had her own fate only been at stake, is most certain—but as it was, she took courage from despair; and certain, that nothing she could attempt, however complete its failure might be, could render the situation of Camilla worse, she nerved herself to the desperate undertaking; and from this moment, to that in which its final result was for ever settled, no further symptom of weakness or indecision impeded the steady perseverance of Geraldine.

CHAPTER XXVI.

La vertu n'appartient qu' à un être foible par sa nature, et fort par sa volonté.

J. J. ROUSSEAU.

IN the hope that Juliet might sleep soundly after the fatigue and anxiety she had endured, the Abbess would not visit her before the hour at which it was necessary to awake her for breakfast. She then went to her door, and found her standing with it half open in her hand, waiting with unspeakable impatience for her approach. Had her obedience to the command, which enjoined her not to leave her room, been less implicit, she would not have been still ignorant of the fearful neighbourhood of the men who still

immoveably guarded the door of Camilla. Happily for Juliet, she had scrupulously obeyed the injunction, and though her heart beat with anxiety to know, what events had induced the change of purpose, which her aunt had mentioned the night before, she was still, in her most unpleasant surmises, immeasurably distant from the truth.

It was the earnest wish of Geraldine to keep her so, at least for some few hours longer; she dreaded to see the effect of so much horror on the young and sensitive mind of Juliet, and when she drew her hand under her own arm, its gentle and affectionate pressure sent a pang to her heart as she thought of the sorrow which, delay it as she might, must reach her at last.

“Why do you take this way, dear aunt? I wished to see poor Camilla as we passed,” said Juliet.

“Not now, my love; I wish to keep her quiet for the present, and for that reason I will not pass her cell.”

There was no danger, as Geraldine well knew, that Juliet should hear of last night's discovery from the sisterhood. The knowledge that ministers of the holy office were engaged in any business, was enough, in those days, to impose silence on the most incautious tongue respecting it; and still more would the dreadful consciousness of their vicinity prevent the terrified nuns from trusting the air with any sound concerning it. But, though no word was uttered on the subject, there was something in the looks of the whole assembly, that instantly caught the attention of Juliet. She looked anxiously from one to another, and one after another they all cast down their eyes, to avoid answering hers, even by a glance. She turned to her aunt—she, too, cautiously looked the other way.

The heart of Juliet sank within her—but she caught the infectious silence, and the morning meal passed heavily, without the sound of a single voice being heard while it lasted.

When the Abbess rose from table, Juliet, alike unmindful of general etiquette, and of her

aunt's particular instructions, walked up to her, and took her arm.

"I have much business for these hours, Juliet," said her aunt, gently disengaging her arm—"Occupy yourself in your own cell this morning, my dear child; after dinner, perhaps, I shall have time to see you."

"No, no; I will see you now," replied Juliet: "your mistaken kindness is in vain—you cannot hide it from me."

Geraldine did not answer—and no longer attempted to prevent Juliet's following her.

"Is she still alive? or did the monster complete his work last night?"—were the first words of Juliet, after they had reached the Abbess's parlour.

"She still lives, Juliet; but—to-morrow——"

"To-morrow she is to die?"

"To-morrow she is to stand her trial—and immediate execution will follow."

"You have then abandoned her?"

"Oh Juliet!——"

"Forgive—I mean not to reproach you—but

do you speak in that calm tone of her execution? It must not be, aunt: it shall not be! Where is her prison?"

"Juliet, Juliet, you speak wildly. No, I have not abandoned her. I am determined to attempt, what, my judgment tells me, offers hardly a shadow of hope; but I will not abandon her. Hear then what I propose to attempt, and tell me if within the range of possibility there be any other thing I can do?"

Juliet listened—and as, one after another, the minute particulars of the scheme were detailed, she lost more and more completely the hope that sustained her.

"Impossible! utterly—utterly impossible!" she exclaimed, as her aunt concluded. "Who is there you can trust with such an enterprise? Whom, even, can you find to propose it to?"

"The workmen who will come this morning to prepare the council-room."

"And if they betray you?"

Geraldine was silent for a moment, and then answered—

“ It could not make her situation worse.”

“ And what would your’s be ?”

“ Juliet, it matters not—perhaps, my death too is sealed.—I will not live to see this horrid murder.”

“ But this will not avert it,” said Juliet, earnestly. “ Even should you, by this blind chance, find a trusty agent, his single arm could not achieve the work you talk of.”

“ And why not, Juliet ?”

Without immediately replying, Juliet rose and sought the master-key in the place where she had so lately been instructed to find it.

“ Come with me to these dreadful vaults—I can there convince you I am right. Oh ! my dear aunt, forgive all this presumption ; but I feel, as if years had passed over me, during the last few dreadful hours.”

“ You know not the comfort, Juliet, that your voice gives me—last night—the difference is greater than you can tell—let us go then, dearest, but by the public staircase ; workmen are already here, and we must avoid them.”

At this moment, the door of the room was opened by sister Johanna, who came to announce that the Abbot of St. Andrea was arrived, and had desired to see the Abbess in the public parlour.

"Must you go alone?" said Juliet, anxiously.

"Yes, Juliet; but fear not for me, in this interview; I am prepared for it:—wait for me here. Go, my daughter," continued the Abbess, addressing the pale and horror-struck Johanna, "go to the Abbot, and tell him I will wait upon him."

The nun retired, and the Abbess, seizing a pen, wrote the word HOPE upon a scrap of paper, and put it in her bosom.

"I will make him lead me to her, Juliet, and if I can leave this word with her, it may sustain her life:—be here when I return."

When Geraldine entered the room where Isidore was sitting, he remained for a moment without rising to receive her, as if to enjoy the triumph of seeing her at last subdued before him; but the moment was not yet arrived

With an aspect as lofty and a brow as placid as ever, the Abbess of Sant' Catherina's bowed in ceremonious salutation, and took her seat. He strove to read, in her dark clear eye, the feelings that he knew were wringing her heart; but he found nothing of it. It was Geraldine who broke the silence.

"Has your lordship received my summons?" she said, in a voice that expressed more authority than fear.

"I have, holy mother; and shall not fail to obey it; but as I found it, in my judgment, necessary that the custody of the abandoned wretch, whose shame has been made manifest to your eyes, should be intrusted to firmer hearts than might be found among your sisterhood, I have, as you doubtless know, placed mutes of the holy office to guard her cell, and I am here to see that they have done their duty—and to relieve their watch by others."

The Abbess bowed.

"Does the arrangement meet your approbation, holy mother?"

"Your lordship cannot doubt it."

"Is it your purpose, holy mother, that the council shall meet in the marble chapter-room?"

"Assuredly. The time, though short, will, as I think, be sufficient for its preparation."

"Zeal and good-will in a righteous cause," replied the Abbot with a gentle smile, "will multiply the means allowed us to advance it."

"Will you not see the prisoner, my lord?"

"Yes, holy mother: such is my purpose."

"Then I will attend your lordship."

"Nay, such ceremony is not needful, and I would spare you the sight of such a wretch."

"It will indeed be painful, but it is my duty, and I will not shrink from it. My office commands me to see her in her cell, to know that she has all that is necessary to sustain life, and no more."

The vexed Abbot again knew that she was right, and dared not contradict her.

Geraldine led the way, but on reaching the door stepped back, as only the same authority, which had placed the grim sentinels before it,

could sanction their permitting any one to enter. Food for the unfortunate Camilla had been delivered to these men, and by them placed within the door of her cell.

They now retired for a few paces, and the Abbot having taken the key from one of them, opened the door, and let the Abbess pass in.

Camilla was lying upon the bed, with her eyes closed, but on Geraldine's pronouncing her name, she opened them. The expression of that look was terrible—but it lasted only a moment, for she saw the Abbot, and again closed her eyes.

The Abbess went to her bedside, and again spoke to her; but her voice, which had been so firm when addressing the iron-hearted bigot who was watching for her own destruction, was now quite inarticulate. Isidore remarked the weakness, and hailed the first symptom of his triumph.

“Holy mother,” said he, “you seem not to be capable of addressing this wretch, as it is our bounden duty to address her. Woman! remember

your sins ! your hours are numbered. Retire, holy mother," he continued, in a tone of contempt, "if this be indeed a necessary duty, I grieve to see that you are so little capable of performing it."

"Have your wants been supplied, Camilla?" said the Abbess, without noticing his mandate.

Again the unfortunate woman opened her eyes for a moment, and fixed them upon Geraldine, but closed them again without speaking.

"Why are you so thinly covered, daughter?" said the Abbess, drawing over her some of the linen of the bed ; "in decency, you should conceal your person from your guards, who must enter with your food."

Geraldine now turned to retire. Her errand was done. As she placed the sheet over Camilla, the ready paper was left in the bed, and so close to her person, as to have made her feel its touch.

Isidore followed the Abbess out of the cell, persuaded that she had performed this painful piece of ceremonious observance, solely to sustain

her reputation for the punctilious attention to all her duties, for which she had so long been celebrated.

Immediately after this visit, he took his leave, and Geraldine was once more left alone with her niece.

"Did you succeed in giving it to her?" inquired Juliet eagerly.

"Perfectly. If greater matters could be managed as well, Juliet, I might yet live to scorn the cruel malice of this Isidore. Now, then, I will attend you to the vaults, though, I confess, I see not, to what purpose."

"You will not say so, when I explain myself; besides, I shall understand your description better when we are there."

A few minutes brought them to the door, leading to the dungeons: Juliet had brought a light, and they renewed the examination together.

The attention of both was directed to the examination of the masonry which terminated the vaults; this appeared exactly the same in all of them. Juliet stood for many minutes, the

lamp held high above her head, and her eyes fixed earnestly upon the wall, silently meditating the possibility of her plan; at length she said—

“I am sure that it may be done—but oh! for God’s sake, risk not the dear chance, by bringing in a stranger to help us.”

“But where is the arm that can do this labour for us, Juliet?”

“I do believe,” replied the poor girl fervently, “that our own strength can do it.”

Geraldine shook her head, as she replied:—

“And should we fail? Think of her fearful agonies! Think of the few short hours we should have for such a labour. Oh, Juliet, what would this slight arm of yours avail against such a bulwark as this?”

“Then Heaven send us a stranger!” said Juliet, as she turned despondingly to leave the vault. “If such be your decision, let us lose no time. I heard the workmen in the chapter-room: it is among them only that we can seek assistance.”

The Abbess did not reply, but silently led the way across the chapel. On again reaching her parlour, she closed the door, and said, with the solemn tone of final resolution—

“So then let it be, Juliet;” and then added, “it is all that is left us; they may betray me, but I know the worst of that.”

“Not you:—they never shall have the power of betraying you,” said Juliet, with the air of a person resolutely determined: “It is I who must make the attempt, and I will do it instantly.”

“And think you I will insure my safety at the risk of yours? Fie, fie; you do not mean it.”

“Indeed, I do not,” replied Juliet; “I too well know it is impossible, but I am not an abbess—I am not even a nun. What dreadful danger would threaten me, if it were known that I had been seen prying about to watch these workmen? My curiosity might be punished by Marcella, by the infliction of a dozen Pater-nosters. You yield, my beloved aunt! you

gold is truth and reason. Give me the gold with which I must tempt our assistant. I will go boldly to the chapter-room, and study the countenances I may find there, and may God give me power to read them!"

"So far will I use your agency, my dearest Juliet, as to permit your entering the chamber in the manner proposed; I know no danger can be incurred by that. Speak to the men about their hitherto labour; their voice and manner will tell much—then bring me your report. I will give you no gold, my Juliet; it is I who must settle that part of the business. You may, I think, with little danger, do what you propose; and should you find it possible to lead one of them apart, where I could meet you, you will have done much."

"That is all I ask," replied Juliet, "and you will thus avoid the wanton and useless danger of conversing with a man, whom, perhaps, after all you may never employ."

There was so much truth in this, that the Abbess immediately acknowledged it with an

affectionate embrace, and Juliet left her in all the nervous trepidation of hope and fear. She took her way to the chapter-room, through the passages least used by the community, but there was less chance of meeting any of them than she was aware. Terror immeasurable, undefinable, and overwhelming, had seized upon them, from the moment they had learnt that familiars of the Inquisition were stationed within the convent walls.

Not a sound was to be heard through the long corridors; the garden was utterly forsaken, and the frightened women hid themselves in little knots of three or four together, in the cells most distant from the dreaded spot where these agents of mysterious power were placed.

On approaching the chapter-room, the sound of so many voices reached her, that she decided upon loitering about the passages, in the hope that, while they were coming or going, she might be able to address herself to some individual without bringing upon her the attention of others at the same time.

While creeping about with this hope, she distinguished a man's voice chanting in a low sweet tone a well-known canticle. The sound was at no great distance, and she soon found that it issued from the lumber-room beside the chapel. She went in, and saw a young man, apparently not more than twenty years of age, engaged in looking over many large rolls of tapestry, to find what was most fitting for the work he was upon.

Juliet's heart beat quick.—How should she begin? Nothing could be more favourable than the circumstances of the encounter; the man was alone, employed at a considerable distance from any companion, and, better still, his youth and good-humoured countenance gave much greater encouragement than she had dared to hope for. But how should she begin?

The young man seemed startled at seeing her, and, perhaps, felt no inconsiderable degree of awe at her religious habit; he immediately took up one of the rolls which lay before him, as if hastened in his decision by her coming, and

prepared to depart. All the premeditated plans she had formed for beginning a conversation, were forgotten in the alarm of that moment, and shutting the door by which she had entered, she put her back against it, and stretching out her hands towards him, exclaimed—

“Christian ! for the love of God, hear me !”

“What is the matter, dear young lady ?” said the man, half frightened, but much affected by the look and manner of the beautiful girl who addressed him. “Is there any thing I can do to serve you ?”

“Oh yes, yes,” said Juliet, her hope strengthened almost to extacy by the kindness of his tone. “Have you a sister ? Have you a wife ? Is there any one you love ?—For her sake help me, and the God of mercy will bless you.”

“Holy Jesus !” exclaimed the young man, a dreadful idea occurring to him. “Is it you, so young and so beautiful, that are going—to be buried yonder ?”

He spoke the last words in a whisper, and turned pale as he uttered them.

“It is one as dear to me as myself,” replied Juliet, approaching him, “and I shall die with her.”

“Not if I can save you, young lady. Tell me how it can be done, without my getting burnt at the stake for it, and I will do it.”

“Wealth shall be yours, beyond what you ever dreamed of,” cried the happy Juliet, “and the danger is none. Now hear me; and if you would save my young life, forget not a word I say.”

She then explained to him the dreadful ceremony that was to take place on the morrow. The poor fellow trembled as he listened to her, yet it was evident, that he listened with that sure attention which renders forgetfulness impossible.

“When your day’s work is done, it is here, good friend, that you must lodge yourself,” and Juliet, as she spoke, opened the door leading to the belfry. “I will bring you food—to-morrow, between the hours of eleven and two, the work of death is to be done. When they have

built up the wall upon their victim, they will leave her, and within an hour, the convent will be as still, as if nothing but God's service had been done here. Still we must wait—wait till darkness help us; then I will come to you, and with this pick-axe, which is here to dig our graves, shall you, good friend, un-make one. I have a key that can open every gate for you, and for the being you will save; and you shall carry gold enough to take you to any land you will, if you should fear discovery hereafter of what you are about to do.”

“Indeed it will be needful, holy lady; I may not dare to remain here after such a deed.”

“Nor shall you. Wait but an instant, if you doubt my word, and I will bring you earnest of the gold I promise.”

“I do not doubt you. If I did, lady, it should not be for you that I would hazard life, as truly I must do. But comfort your kind heart—I will stand by you—and I see not but the thing may go through well, and safely. Your gold shall make a happy wife of one as young,

as gentle, and almost as handsome as yourself. But hark ! that is Ricardo calling me—I shall be sure to find some way of hiding here: and do not risk the coming to me to-night; I can manage for my supper without that.”

So saying, the youth shouldered the tapestry, and obeyed the call of his comrade; leaving Juliet in a state of happiness, to which it would be difficult to do justice by any description.

On entering the room where her aunt was waiting for her, in sickening doubt and dread, rather than with hope, Juliet’s first impulse was to throw herself on her knees, and exclaim, “Thank God with me—she is saved!”

A burst of tears, so violent as almost to terrify the Abbess, followed, but they brought most needful relief to her over-strained feelings.

In a short time she recovered strength and composure, and then communicated every thing that had passed between herself and her new friend.

When Juliet had finished her narrative, and received the grateful praises of Geraldine for

her firmness, she addressed her aunt with the most affecting earnestness, entreating her not in any way to take part in the escape of Camilla. Her arguments were so well-founded, and her anxiety, that they should be complied with, so deeply sincere, that Geraldine thought she had a right to be indulged.

"I do yield to you, my love," she said at length; "having listened patiently to all your arguments, I will allow that they are too powerful to be rejected. It would be cruel, for the sake of vain bravado, to repay all you have done by endangering myself; I know, that to think you have saved me too, will be no small reward."

"This trust—this confidence—how can I thank you enough?" said the delighted girl.—
"Think not I presume too much upon such kindness, if I say, that to make it quite effectual, you must immediately mix with your poor frightened nuns, and, above all things, at the hour of Camilla's escape, you must have many with you—who may bear witness, should evi-

dence be wanting, where and how you were engaged."

"My guide and counsellor! You shall be obeyed, Juliet," said Geraldine; "but let me, in my turn, have some influence. The hour of dinner has passed—I know not how—or when—every thing is out of rule—it is quite impossible it should be otherwise; therefore, your being absent from chapel and from supper will not be remarked. Go to your cell; I will send you such refreshment as I know you need; endeavour to calm your mind; and remember how much depends on your succeeding. May this night be passed in sleep, dear Juliet!—to-morrow is a dreadful day—end how it may; I will furnish you with money before I sleep. You know where to find the dress Camilla must put on. Now then, my Juliet, we will part; it is not while we are together, that we shall either of us recover from what we have suffered since the morning."

CHAPTER XXVII.

And, with deep charge of secrecy,
She named a place to meet.

SCOTT.

ET well knew that, under the present circumstances, there would be no danger of her making remarks of any kind, by repairing to her father's room before the matin service. She felt anxious to consult with her once more, notwithstanding the tremendous business of the day; and was determined that, after this interview, she should not again meet in private till the stake she was about to play for should be lost or won.

She found the Abbess occupied in arranging leases, bills, and letters, in different packets, tying them carefully, and writing labels for each. Surprised at such a moment to find her sufficiently calm for this employment, Juliet exclaimed—

“My dear aunt! is it possible that you can be thus perfectly composed?”

“I am preparing, dearest Juliet,” she replied, “for events which may be likely to follow Camilla’s escape.”

Juliet dared not inquire what these words meant—she dreaded to hear some answer that should indicate doubt of the consequences of what they were about to undertake.

“In short,” continued the Abbess, “I would be ready for whatever may happen. These parchments are the records of all the recent temporal transactions of the convent. I wish, whatever happens to me, to leave proof that I have not misapplied the power which has been vested in me——. Should Camilla perish——, But I must not look that way.”

"Indeed you should not," replied Juliet cheerfully; "I have not yet studied my fellow-creatures deeply, but the kind voice, the free and fearless eye, the frank, bold, bearing of my young accomplice, rest upon my memory most pleasantly. No, dearest friend; that man will not betray me."

"I do believe it is impossible—and yet, my child——. But I will not think of that. No, Juliet, no—he could not betray, wantonly betray, to utter and most horrible destruction, such a creature as thou art!"

An expression of such extreme misery appeared on the countenance of Geraldine, as she fixed her eyes on her young counsellor, that Juliet saw she must be herself the greater heroine, and that the firmness necessary for this day's service must be all her own.

"Fear it not, my beloved aunt," she replied, fondly embracing her; "but let us turn all our thoughts to our poor prisoner. I am come, during this last hour of leisure, to ask your counsel, as to where she shall shelter herself,

when we have put her forth into the darkness of night?"

"I have thought deeply of it, Juliet, and still adhere to the opinion, that to hang about our gates in the garb of poverty, will be her best concealment, till Jacintha comes. By night, her only shelter can be the porch of some church or palace at Ancona; but she should come to these gates with the first of the mendicants who frequent them in the morning, and remain among the last who linger for the remnants of the supper in the evening; for even if they knew she was gone, it is here they would least expect to find her. A few days will, I doubt not, bring Jacintha here, and then she is safe. This woman has directions to travel with a free display of wealth, as the wife of a rich merchant. In that character, no difficulty can attend her, openly taking passage for any part of the world, where she may wish to join her husband. She may embark her servants and her luggage openly, and when she will; and Camilla, as one of her attendants, may pass securely."

"No," replied Juliet, "this arrangement cannot be improved. And now farewell, my beloved aunt, I will see you no more alone, till all is over."

"Juliet!" said the Abbess, in a tone of authority, "I go with you to the vaults to-night."

"Then will you give as cruel a stab to the heart that best loves you, as ever Isidore gave to yours," replied Juliet, clasping her hands together with bitter feeling. "Oh, aunt!" she continued, "did you not promise me?"

"Not this, Juliet: surely you did not think I could ever promise you this?—Think what you ask of me. It was I, who pledged my word to Camilla that I would save her—it was I, who vowed, in my secret soul, that I would do it, or perish with her. And would you ask me to leave the whole burden of this solemn vow on you?—You, my poor child—whom I have also sworn to shelter and protect! Think, Juliet, what a perjured wretch you would make me—oh, do not ask it!"

“Were your determination,” answered Juliet gravely, “less vitally important to us all, I would not dare to do it. I would not dare to point out to you, whose word I would for ever make my law, the cruel fallacy of such reasoning. I will ask you one question, and I implore you to let your decision rest upon the answer you shall in conscience give to it. Do you believe, my aunt, that the escape of Camilla will be rendered more easy by your being present at it?”

“Perhaps not, Juliet. But shall I rest in safety, while you ——”

“Hear me—hear me,” cried Juliet vehemently, “and think well, before you let a feeling of idle punctilio destroy us all. I do not think this youth will hold his purpose if you appear. He is hardly so ignorant as not to know, that his danger would be multiplied a hundred-fold.—He will not do it.”

“Juliet!—I am become a child in your hands.—Be it as you will.”

“Now then,” said Juliet, while a glow of

satisfaction flushed her sweet face,—“ now then, be seen by every one—all through the day—all through the night—and when the blessed sun of to-morrow shall rise upon us, you shall see me enter your chamber with its first beams.”

So saying, she gave her aunt one fond, but hasty kiss, and fearing the result of further parley, glided back to her own room.

A few minutes afterwards the bell sounded for chapel, and Juliet joined herself to Marcella's troop. From the chapel she went as usual to the refectory for breakfast, and all with such an air of steady composure, as showed that the progress of life cannot always be measured by weeks or months; but, that events and feelings will sometimes do in a day, the work of many years.

Geraldine, meanwhile, fully aware of the importance of Juliet's parting injunction, complied with it carefully. Scarcely one of the establishment but had been addressed by her, on some pretence or other, before the hour arrived, at which the judges were expected. She inspected

in person the table that was laid for the banquet, and gave orders respecting every circumstance of their reception, and of the dreadful business which was to follow.

The mutes had received instructions from Bartone to remove the person of Camilla from her cell to the sacristy, where she was to await his order to appear before her judges. No circumstance of rigour, which could increase the horror of her situation, was omitted. No woman was permitted to approach her, and the whole community were commanded to shut themselves into their cells at the hour appointed for her removal, that no passing glance of human sympathy might reach her.

Devotional exercises, sufficient to occupy an hour, were appointed to each, and it occurred to Juliet, that, during the period of this strict retirement, she might safely visit her co-adjutor on the staircase of the belfry.

The precise time, at which the removal of Camilla was to take place, had not been mentioned; it was only known, that it would be

done within the hour prescribed for the seclusion of the community, and Juliet determined, that her visit should be made immediately after the bell had sounded, which was to mark its commencement.

She had, indeed, no reason to fear, that any loiterers would cross her path. The first stroke of the bell found every nun within the walls, already on her knees, and had the convent been on fire, it may be doubted if many of them would have dared to quit that position.

Furnished with a bottle of wine and some biscuits, Juliet made her way, unmolested, to the lumber-room. Her master-key gave her ready access to it, and she carefully secured the door behind her, as soon as she had entered. This done, she turned towards the door that opened upon the belfry stairs. It was closed, and she approached to open it. As she drew near to it, she perceived, with feelings which may easily be imagined, that the heavy bolt on the outside was fully pushed into its staple.

That Camilla was lost—that she was herself

betrayed, were the overwhelming thoughts which naturally presented themselves to the terrified girl; yet, even at that fearful moment, she remembered that her aunt was safe from the consequences of her unfortunate attempt; and the consolation this recollection brought with it, restored her composure and resolution in a manner that nothing else could have done. She stood for a moment to consider if there were any possibility of the youth's having concealed himself in the room. It was filled with lumber of various kinds; but she soon ascertained that concealment among it was impossible. With hopeless perseverance in a search which she felt but too certain was in vain, she opened the door which led to the terrace, and just within it, his head snugly supported on the first step, which, by the aid of his arm, made no bad pillow, lay the object of her suspicion in a profound slumber.

Perhaps we never look at a countenance with such confidence that it cannot deceive us, as when the unconscious features are relaxed in sleep. As Juliet looked at the calm expression

of the face before her, she exclaimed involuntarily—"No traitor could sleep thus!"

Her voice awakened him, and he started up with some symptoms of alarm; but a second glance sufficed to re-assure him, and he began to express his thanks for the refreshment she had brought him, which, though not absolutely necessary (for his wallet lay beside him), was nevertheless very acceptable. But she cautioned him not to speak. The sacristy, it is true, was at the farther extremity of the chapel; yet even at that moment it was not impossible that the officials might be leading their prisoner through the passage which led to the chamber they were in.

Still Juliet most anxiously desired to converse with him, and after a moment's consideration she led him nearly to the top of the staircase, and having secured the door at the bottom of it, ventured to address him. She now stated to him explicitly the amount of the sum he should receive, the moment Camilla was outside the convent gate. In reply, he told her frankly, that it greatly exceeded his expectations, but

that her generosity would bind him to help her friend to the very utmost of his power.

Juliet took advantage of this assurance so far as to confess, that if he could furnish a shelter for her during the night or two that must pass before she could leave Ancona, it would be most essentially increasing the obligation they should owe him.

“Nothing more easy, Signora, than that,” replied the man cordially; “my mother lives by letting lodgings, and though it is but a poor place, I doubt if we could find a safer.”

“Thank Heaven!” exclaimed Juliet, inexpressibly relieved; “you know not the comfort you have given me.”

“It is a comfort to hear you say so, Signora; but I hope ——” and, for the first time, his countenance had an expression of fear upon it,—“I hope, Signora, that she will not wear the dress of a nun?”

Juliet explained to him the preparation she had made to avoid this; and they then entered into a discussion of the plan (which as well as

every other part of the scheme, Juliet spoke of as her own,) by which it was proposed that Camilla should receive her daily food by mixing with the crowd of beggars who constantly received supplies at the gate of the convent. To this he strongly objected; reasonably remarking, that though her disguise might conceal her from most of the sisters who took it in turn to attend at the gate, yet it was possible that some eye might be struck with a resemblance to a person who must, as he truly said, be much in their thoughts. Juliet felt the truth of all this; but observed that it could only be avoided by his coming himself among the crowd to receive from her the intelligence of Jacintha's arrival.

"That will never do, Signora; I am known as well as St. Michael's Tower throughout Ancona; and nobody will see Pedro Rolli going a begging, without thinking that something queer is the reason of it. No; that will never do."

"Then how can I convey the intelligence to her?"

"Would there be any danger, if the gentle-

woman you expect were to pay a visit at the convent?"

"Certainly not;—she must do so to announce her own arrival."

"Then, do you think, Signora, that you can remember these words, 'Maria Rolli, Street of the Resurrection, No. 52?' The weeks of the year, Signora, and the blessed resurrection, you know; do you think you can remember it?"

"Fear me not," replied Juliet,—"I am hardly likely to forget it; Jacintha, then, shall seek her there?"

"And shall be sure to find her, Signora; but if I may presume so much, I would say that after seeing this dame Jacintha, and teaching her how to find us, you would do well to have nothing further to do with either of them, till they are out of danger—nor then either, Signora, unless you are out of danger too."

"You are very right, Pedro," replied Juliet; "fear not that I will risk the safety of any of you—and now I will leave you. I must have been here an hour, and I can return securely:

to-night then, about two hours before midnight, I shall seek you here—farewell.”

The voice of Juliet trembled, which Pedro perceiving, answered cheerily—

“ Fear nothing, Signora, we will get through the business, though ’tis a strange one, and I will marry my pretty Laura before I am a week older. Farewell, Signora !”

Juliet thought it safest to traverse the terrace, and re-enter by the door which led to the great staircase. She would have given much to communicate the result of her interview with Pedro to her aunt, but she dared not seek her. The time was fast approaching when the arrival of the three judges might be expected; and she was most thankful when she again reached her cell, so large a portion of her anxiety removed, and without having encountered any alarm on her way.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Respectons ses décrets en silence, et faisons notre devoir.

J. J. ROUSSEAU.

ISIDORE was the first of the expected guests who arrived. He was attended by six persons in the dress of ecclesiastics. Four of these the Abbess knew as officiating priests of St. Andrea's, and they were doubtless come to perform the mass that was to precede the trial, and the other religious ceremonies which were to follow it; but the other two were strangers—and something seemed to whisper to her heart, as she looked at them, that they were the executioners.

The Abbess of St. Ildefonse followed him, and almost at the same moment the aged Abbot of St. Sebastiano also arrived.

Geraldine was seated in the public parlour of the convent to receive them, with all the state and ceremony belonging to her rank. A few sentences, stiffly formal, and in which no allusion was made to the solemn business that had called them together, were followed by an invitation to adjourn to the refectory, where the banquet was prepared.

Isidore's eyes incessantly followed the Abbess of Sant' Catherina's—he watched every look and every movement—he listened with breathless attention to every word she uttered, but it was in vain he sought to witness the feeling he had perilled his soul to create. She evinced not the slightest emotion of any kind. Her demeanour was uniformly dignified and calm; she did the honours of her splendid board with the punctilious observance of pride and high station, nor could any human eye have traced upon that noble brow one shadow of the dark terrors which tortured the brain beneath it. It was not before Bartone she could be seen to tremble; had she suffered the most torturing death

in his presence, she would not have gratified him by a single sigh.

From the table they passed into the chapel, where the whole community were already assembled, and where mass was performed; while the unhappy Camilla, still guarded by her hateful mutes, was stationed standing in the middle of the aisle, through the whole ceremony.

At the conclusion of it, instead of the *Gloria in excelsis*, the female choir sang the plaintive *Miserere mei*; but many a sweet voice faltered, and some few, in whom terror had not dried up the source of pity, were rendered inaudible by tears.

The service being ended, the four superiors continued in their stalls, till the whole community had retired. The Abbess of Sant' Caterina's then rose from her seat, and led the way to the marble chapter-room; the Abbess of St. Ildefonse went next; and the two Abbots, walking side by side, followed.

A rudely carved bench of black marble had been covered with tapestry for their accommodation, and on this they seated themselves. Before

them stood a table, on which was laid the general rule of the Dominican order, impressed with its seal, emblematic of the founder's birth, a dog bearing in his mouth a flaming torch. And near it lay the especial rule of the convent of Sant' Catherina of Siena, with its sacred symbol of two bleeding hearts. There were also, a pen and iron inkstand, and a small roll of blank parchment, before which was seated on a low stool, with his face towards the judges, one of the ecclesiastics who had accompanied Isidore.

When they were all seated, the Abbot of St. Andrea's commanded the two strangers, who were the only persons of his train, except his secretary, that remained near him, to call in the prisoner. She was left to await this summons in the aisle of the chapel, and appeared almost immediately, between the mutes.

Whether it were, that the nature of Camilla was of that elastic character which rises higher from oppression, or that the word which bade her still preserve the precious balm, bestowed by Heaven to sustain us all, upheld her spirit, we

know not, but she came into the presence of her judges with no external marks of fear or weakness.

As soon as she had taken the place indicated to her by Isidore, which was in front of her judges, and immediately behind the secretary, Geraldine arose, and from a parchment she held in her hand, read the announcement of the cause for which they were assembled.

The accusation was then read by the secretary, and when it was concluded, Camilla stepped forward from between the mutes who were still stationed beside her, and addressed the court.

Her first words were pronounced so feebly as to be scarcely audible—she stopped short, but after a moment began again with greater strength.

“Let not my weakness,” said she, addressing herself particularly to the two Abbesses—“Let not my natural weakness plead against me. In my condition, an innocent woman may well tremble. And yet, most holy mothers, and

you, most reverend fathers of the church, I ought to stand fearless before your justice.

“The crime of which I stand accused, is one my soul abhors. The breach of any vow is heinous sin—but to break that most solemn one which seals a union with Christ, merits all the severity the church can show.—I NEVER TOOK THAT VOW.—So help me Heaven, in my hour of need! I am the lawful wife of Count Cesario di Mondello. This is my defence—and on the truth of it, I stake my soul’s salvation.”

She said no more, and the silence of a moment followed. The Abbess of St. Ildefonse then spoke in a low voice to Isidore, who sat next to her. The Abbot of St. Sebastiano bent forward his grey head towards his fellow judges, and a whispered conversation followed among them.

“Her plea,” said the venerable Abbess of St. Ildefonse, suddenly raising her voice, “must be most deliberately and cautiously investigated, my lord Abbot, before we can reject it:—not for the few days that remain for me on earth—
ld they be passed in glory, exceeding all that

this world ever saw, would I doom her, while a shadow of hope remained that her statement might be true."

"Hear her words, holy fathers!" exclaimed Geraldine. "If ye be men, pause long, ere ye condemn."

Isidore did not answer, but took from his bosom a document, which he handed across the table to the secretary, saying,—“read that aloud.”

The monk obeyed. It was a formal attestation of Camilla's profession in the convent of St. Urbano at Rome, signed by the superior of the convent, and four ecclesiastics of high rank in the church.

A deep and frightful silence followed the reading of this parchment.

"Your judgment,"—said Isidore in a tone of high authority.

Still they were silent.

"Is then the word of this degraded wretch to be placed against the testimony of some of the holiest of men?"

No voice answered the challenge.

“How is this,” exclaimed Isidore, with vehemence. “Virgin mother of God ! is it beneath a roof reared for the honour of that pure spouse thou gavest to thy Son—is it here, that a horror so atrocious shall escape unpunished ? Speak, holy father !—Holy mothers, speak ! What is your sentence ?”

“My lord——there may be doubt——” said the gentle Abbess of St. Ildefonse.

“Take care, holy mother !——Be mindful of what you say—I give you warning. It is not these marble walls can shut in words of blasphemy. Wherefore was that holy office instituted, which guards our blessed faith with such dear care ? Can it not dive into the very heart, and see the impious thought ere it be born in words ? Think you this office sleeps ? I WILL AWAKE IT ! Ay—with a trump that shall echo from the inmost recesses of its sacred walls, even to the Vatican.”

The aged woman, to whom he addressed these appalling words, shrank into silence, and groans

burst from more than one breast in that dark conclave.

It was again the deep-toned voice of Bartone that spoke.

“Does then this solemn attestation go for nothing?—Is such your pleasure? If it be—speak, and it shall be recorded.”

“Let me see the signatures,” said the Abbot of St. Sebastiano. “There is one among them I should know among a thousand—Vancilli was the friend of my youth.”

Isidore handed the scroll to him. The old man shook his head as he examined it, and gave it back without saying a word.

“Am I believed at last, holy brother?” said Isidore with a sneer.

“Not your word, holy brother,—not your word could I doubt,” replied the Abbot of St. Sebastiano, “but I would gladly doubt my eyesight, if thereby I could spare this young life.”

“This is trifling, holy brother—and on a subject which it ill becomes one in your station to

deem trivial. Remember at what risk you falsify your vow, and speak according to the evidence.

—Guilty—or not guilty?”

“Guilty!”

“Guilty!”

Was faintly whispered by two palsied voices.

“Guilty!” cried Bartone, in his still deep base voice.

Geraldine spoke not—but it was not needed.

“Record the sentence,” said the Abbot of St. Andrea’s, in a voice of ill-suppressed triumph.

“The court is broken up.”

The judges rose, and one by one left the chamber. Isidore was the last, and lingered on the threshold to give a parting order to the guards. He then stepped forward to the side of Geraldine, and said, “One hour is allowed to prepare the prisoner. All the community must be present, holy mother, at the ceremony of degradation, and at the service that will follow it; when this is ended, let them repair each to their separate cell, saying aloud the psalms of penitence, till the bell tolls for the departed. Such is the law.”

Geraldine bowed, and passed on. The four superiors retired to the convent parlour. The four officiating priests followed; but the other two ecclesiastics remained, to arrange the ceremonies of the tragedy which was to succeed.

A trembling nun, who looked pale as a spectre, handed round wine and cakes. Not a word was spoken—not a look was exchanged.—Each drained the cup of wine which was brought them, as if they hoped to sustain thereby the life they felt failing within them.

Isidore alone appeared to retain the firmness necessary to carry through the work of horror, which all had consented to witness. He did not, however, attempt to disturb the stillness that had settled upon them. It is probable that he felt no wish to learn what was passing at their hearts.

The hour wore heavily away, yet all started when the bell of the chapel told them that it was gone.

The courage of Geraldine now threatened to fail her. She attempted to rise, but feared to do so, lest she should betray the weakness so

rapidly stealing upon her. Isidore marked the livid paleness of her cheek, he saw the drops of agony that started on her brow; and hoping she might be about to utter some desperate protest to stop the proceedings, which would at once place her within the danger of that fearful power it was his especial object to raise against her, he suddenly rose, and said,—

“It is time this duty were performed. Why do we thus delay to cleanse the church of Christ of this foul blot?”

The reluctant conclave, startled by this threatening summons, rose together, and Geraldine amongst the rest; but mist and vapours swam before her eyes, her knees sank under her, her heart ceased to beat, and, unsustained by any friendly arm, she fell prostrate on the floor.

This was not what Isidore wished. Were she really dead, there might indeed be some pleasure in knowing that she fell at last, and perished beneath the power she had so often braved. But that she should swoon at such a moment, grieved him; for though it showed how futile was her

boasted strength of mind, it must put her beyond the reach of the pang he had prepared for her.

The good Abbess of St. Ildefonse, tenderly sympathising with feelings so like her own, kneeled down beside Geraldine, and begging one of the attendant ecclesiastics to seek for water, endeavoured to afford her relief, by raising her head and chafing her hands.

"Our business is too important, holy mother," said Isidore, "to permit your performing the office of nurse to our beloved sister, however dearly we regard her health." Then turning to one of the priests, he said, "Seek in the offices, brother Basil, for some female, who may do what is needful for her.—Abbess of St. Ildefonse," he continued, sternly, "your pity for a feeble sister must not impede your duty to your God. Leave her, holy mother;—walk forward—I will see that she be properly attended."

"My lord," replied the venerable recluse, "our sister feels the horror of this hour as a woman. I pretend not to more strength. Go on, holy fathers, and meet as you may the

ghastly spectacle that awaits you. I will remain beside this honoured lady, and succour her with my best care ; it is a work more fitting to my sex and calling, than the attending your dread sacrifice."

"Be it as you will, holy mother," replied Bartone ; "yet remember there are more eyes than mine that watch the performance of your duty."

"My lord," interrupted the Abbess of St. Ildefonse, with spirit, "I remember my fifty years of faithful service before God's altar, and I fear not that his vicegerents on earth should find it a sin, that, while living as a saint, I have preserved the heart of a woman."

Isidore was silent. He knew how strict was the life this holy woman had led ; he knew, too, that her brother was one of the holy college into which it was his dearest hope to enter.

The two Abbots now moved on together, preceded by the priests, leaving Geraldine still insensible, and the Abbess of St. Ildefonse tenderly exerting all her skill to restore her.

As soon as the Abbots had reached their respective stalls, and the priests their stations at the altar, Camilla was led to the front of it by the men who had been employed to prepare her for the ceremony of degradation.

A stool was placed at the distance of a few yards from the lowest step of the altar, and on this the unhappy Camilla was seated, in the full dress of her order, and with her veil thrown completely over her. The rule she was said to have transgressed was written on parchment, and held up before her by an aged sister of the convent.

The community lined the two sides of the nave, leaving a wide space between them, in the middle of which was a bier, with a black pall thrown across it.

As soon as Camilla was seated, the two lines chanted in low and dismal cadence the alternate verses of the Miserere, pausing long between each verse. During these pauses, the stranger monks took off the veil, hood, and robe of Camilla, leaving her unclothed, save by a long

tunic of white cloth, which reached from the throat to the feet. Her religious habit was torn asunder into many fragments, and scattered on the floor.

The sentence recorded against her was then read aloud in Latin, and three times repeated. She was now commanded to rise, and the procession began. It was preceded by a priest, who carried a large cross reversed. The sisterhood followed, two and two, each bearing in her hand an extinguished torch. Then came the pale Camilla, in her white shroud-like garment, supported on each side by a sable mute. Next followed two priests, one carrying incense, the other holy water; and last, the two mitred Abbots closed the line.

The march was slow and solemn. Each nun, her head sunk in her bosom, and her veil closely drawn round her, recited in a low whisper the prayers for the dying.

In this order they passed down the side aisle, and up to the centre of the nave where stood the bier. The nuns again divided into two lines,

taking their station as before. Camilla, pale, motionless, and seemingly unconscious of what was passing, was raised without a struggle in the arms of the mutes, and placed upon the bier, where she lay perfectly still and unresisting while the assistant priests spread the funeral pall over her.

This ceremony completed, the solemn service for the dead was heard from the altar; and when this ended, the thrilling words, "*Requiem æternam dona ei, Domine!*" burst forth in full chorus from the nuns.

When the Requiem ceased, a silence like that of the grave ensued, and lasted till time sufficient had been allowed for each to breathe an inward prayer.

Then a signal was given to the nuns, who immediately retired with slow and noiseless steps, not one of them daring to throw a farewell glance to the poor wretch, who, warm in life and youth, was now to be interred within her horrid tomb. All the assistants followed, except the mutes, the stranger priests, whose

unpitying services were still required, and the two judges, who were bound to see the final execution of their sentence.

As soon as the doors of the chapel were closed, Isidore gave a signal to the men. The bier was lifted on their shoulders, and borne through the iron door into the vaults.

It was, as Geraldine had supposed, within the massive depth of the wall which guarded the building from the sea, that the living tomb was fabricated, and the dark aperture now yawned before them; its horrors rendered visible by the pale light of a wax taper that burned within it, near which was placed a pitcher of water, and a small loaf of bread.

The bier was placed on the earth—the pall was removed; but the assistants started back as they withdrew it, exclaiming—

“She is already dead!”

“Then bury her,” said Isidore, with horrid calmness.

Camilla was again raised in the arms of her executioners, who bore her forward to the dark

recess; the cool air revived her strength, and the friendly faintness forsook her; she opened her eyes upon the scene, and all its terrors seized her heart at once. For a moment she looked wildly on them all, and then uttered a shriek, which left its sound within the ears that heard it as long as life remained. Yet it did but hasten the deed. Startled, but not softened, by that dismal cry, the men threw her from their arms, and instantly began the frightful work that was to shut out the air of life for ever.

The wretched woman sprang upon her feet—the stones were rolled against her—she raised her helpless arms, and madly strove to impede the savage work—in vain. A few short moments hid her from their sight, and a few more restored the treacherous wall to the same look of harmlessness as its neighbours.

The men whose hearts had stood this deed, still had strength left to creep like loathsome reptiles from the vaults. Isidore closed and locked the door—and if any feeling like regret smote his heart, it was that Geraldine

Abbot of St. Sebastiano had not entered
em. The old man was on his knees
he door ; and if prayers and tears could
him from his share of that dark deed, he
to be accounted guilty.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Courage mounteth with occasion.

SHAKSPEARE.

ALL who had come to Sant' Catherina's to assist at the trial and execution of Camilla, left it as soon as their tremendous business was completed, except the Abbess of St. Ildefonse. Geraldine continued so alarmingly ill, that the good lady, who had great faith in her own powers as a leech, would not leave her, but dispatching her attendants to her convent, that the community might not be alarmed at her prolonged absence, she prepared to pass the night with her friend.

The state of Geraldine, though not threaten-

ing danger to her life, was yet such as to require great attention. For many hours, faintings continued to succeed each other, with little intermission, and when at length they ceased, she was so reduced as to render her voice scarcely audible.

Her faculties, her nerves, and her strength had, indeed, been too severely tried; and had not her bodily powers yielded before the last awful scene, it is highly probable that her mind might have been for ever unsettled by the intensity of her sufferings.

The melancholy nuns met in the refectory at the hour of supper. Even Isidore had directed the omission of the vesper service. The close neighbourhood of their lost, but still living companion, even he, thought might prove too terrible.

Dreadful as were the circumstances in which they last met, and heavily as the remembrance pressed upon them all, they yet were conscious of relief from the departure of the hated officials; and by degrees the silence which had so

long chained their lips, relaxed. Again knots of whisperers drew together, and the healing effects of companionship and sympathy were felt by all.

Yet there was one among them who, though she rather sought than shunned the notice of those around her, would have given worlds, had she possessed them, to be freed from them,—from the lingering hours that seemed to stand still, in mockery of her impatience,—and from the slowly-sinking light of day.

The flushed cheek, and feverish eye of Juliet, attracted the attention of Marcella.

“This day has been too much for you, my poor dear,” said she, addressing her kindly, “we shall have you ill too, as well as our holy mother, if we do not take care. I will boil some herbs for you, my dear; and, if I am not too much worn out, after this awful day, I will pass the night in your cell, to see that you want for nothing.”

“Oh, my dear kind mother,” exclaimed Juliet, with a portion of her newly-learned self-

command, "it is you who want care; how very ill you look! I would offer to watch by you, but, in truth, I am already so weary that I long to go to rest: this has been a heavy day, and I would it were over."

"A heavy day! a heavy day, indeed!" exclaimed Marcella, "and a heavy night, too, will it be to one who was amongst us three short days ago!—But do I look so very ill, my dear? Surely I do feel very poorly——"

"Indeed, dear mother," replied Juliet, "you must be mindful of your health. What would your poor novices do, if you were sick?"

"Very true, my dear. Who can say what would become of them?—and the holy mother sick too! The will of God be done! But truly we are visited by afflictions!"

At length the clock struck nine; it was the hour for retiring to rest, and the rule of Sant' Catherina enforced strict conformity to this hour, throughout the whole community. Even in case of sickness, the arrangements for watch-

ing were to be completed before it struck, so that no excuse might be left for any nun or novice whom the Abbess (she alone being exempted from the rule) should find lingering in the galleries. Juliet knew all this, and she knew also, that even should her cautious step be heard, it would this night create far more fear than curiosity.

This conviction robbed her enterprise of half its terrors; and yet enough were left to curdle the young blood of Juliet. Twice she applied her hand to the fastening of her door, and that trembling hand failed to obey her will. She kneeled down and fervently implored of Heaven to grant her power to act.

It is no miracle that sends an instant answer to such prayers as these. To feel that the purpose which unstrings our nerves, and sends our blood back freezing to the heart, is still such as we can ask the God of truth to aid, will give firmness to the weakest hand. Juliet felt that it was so, as she lifted her heart to Heaven; and

when she rose from her knees, she sat down for a short moment, as if to give time for this healing balm to do its work within her.

It was with a consciousness of inward strength which gave her undoubting confidence in herself, that she now left her cell.

Noiseless as the movement of the bat's velvet wing, was the step of Juliet, as she passed the doors of her companions. "They cannot sleep," thought she:—"Surely no eye can sleep within these walls to-night—poor souls! I pity them—they have not my hope—."

Her lamp in one hand, her all-powerful key in the other, Juliet stood before the door of the lumber-room. Why did she pause before she turned the key? Could she still fear treachery in Pedro Rolli? No. Her young heart said it was impossible. Yet the moment that would prove him true was so awfully important, that she trembled at feeling it was come.

She rallied her courage, and entered the room:—all was profoundly still.

"And so it should be," thought Juliet, ad-

vancing towards the staircase he had chosen for repose in the morning.

She set down her lamp where it would be sheltered from the wind, and prepared to open the door; but before she could do so, it was unfastened from within, and the comely person of Pedro Rolli presented itself to her delighted eyes.

Both were almost equally anxious to begin the work of mercy. Pedro instantly shouldered a pick-axe, and put into Juliet's hand a remnant of the wine she had brought him.

"The poor soul will have need of it," said he; "trust you as faithfully as she may, her heart must be cold within her before this."

Juliet sought and found the garments which had been prepared, and another moment brought them to the door of the vaults. The gloomy horrors of their damp darkness seemed, as she opened it, to be changed into noonday brightness, so delightful to her was this near consummation of her eager hopes.

Pedro gave one glance of inquiry at the recent

masonry. "It looks strong enough to keep in a poor weak girl," said he; "but it will hardly keep me and my pick-axe out."

"Camilla! dear Camilla!" cried Juliet aloud.
"Can you hear me, my Camilla?"

Pedro was too much in earnest with his work to pause in it, even to give the impatient Juliet an opportunity of listening for an answer. His task was no light one. Superstition, and her strange offspring, Cruelty, seldom leave their work half done.

Juliet watched his lusty strokes with feelings fluctuating between joy at their sure effect, and impatience that they fell not stronger still. Mass after mass gave way, yet still she saw her not; but, from time to time, she continued to repeat her name, that, as soon as a voice could reach her, it might bring assurance of a friend. Pedro paused for an instant to take breath, and Juliet seized the interval to reiterate—"Camilla! dear Camilla! answer me!" But no voice spoke in return.

Again Pedro raised his arm, and with renewed

strength, brought down a huge block, that had resisted many strokes.

As it fell, Juliet espied a faint beam of light; so faint indeed that her straining eye failed to assure her of it fully; then again she lost it wholly, but at length she fancied that it gleamed once more through one small crevice.

"There, Pedro!" she exclaimed in an agony of impatience—"strike your axe there!—I see it, I see it!—'tis the light that was buried with her."

The good Pedro saw it too, and, with eagerness equal to her own, aimed at the opening whence it came;—another block fell at his feet.

Juliet screamed with ecstasy—she saw her—and, forgetful that she was arresting the work which she would have given half her life to accelerate, she thrust her arm through the opening to catch hold upon her.

"Camilla! dear Camilla!" she repeated—and now a voice replied to her, strange, wild, and inarticulate; but it was evidence of life, and the heart of Juliet bounded at the sound.

Pedro gently put aside her arm, and in another moment forced an opening large enough to permit the head and breast of the poor victim to be visible.

"Can you not take her through at once?" said Juliet.

"I think I might, if she has power herself to help me do it."

But Camilla was in no state to help him; she was alive, and standing upright, with her face towards them; the expiring taper which glimmered beside her, showed her fearful countenance: her eyes were frightfully distended, and her lips continued to move, giving utterance to no words, but to a shivering cry that made her teeth knock together.

"Pedro, she cannot move!" said the terrified Juliet, "go on, go on, till we can take her in our arms—do you know me, dear Camilla? did she not tell you that you should not perish? now, my Camilla—now."

Pedro threw his pickaxe aside, and striding over the remnant of the wall he had left before

her, raised her in his arms, and succeeded in bearing her through the opening, and laying her gently on the floor of the vault, on which Juliet sat to support her. The feeling and gentle-hearted young man then brought the wine he had so considerably saved for her, and assisted Juliet in forcing a little of it into the parched mouth of Camilla. To the inexpressible delight of Juliet, and almost equally to the satisfaction of Pedro, she swallowed it—and immediately after heard a deep sigh, which was plainly indicative of a softer and more natural state of feeling: again they put the wine to her lips, of which she took a little without resistance, and then turning her face upon the bosom of Juliet, a shuddering horror ran through all her limbs, and she closed her eyes, whose wild glare had been so painful to behold.

“We must take her out of this dismal place at once, Signora,” said Pedro, preparing to raise her again in his arms; “if she comes quite to herself here, the sight of these cursed vaults will be enough to kill her again.”

“But the wall, Pedro?” said Juliet anxiously, “must it not be built up again, in case the door of the vault should be opened?”

“Let them build it up themselves,” answered Pedro, with something very like an oath; “it is not I will do it for them.”

“But the danger of discovery, good Pedro?”

“It will never hurt you, Signora, even if you stay amongst their hard hearts, which surely I hope you will not; but if you do, they will never believe it was you that pulled down that wall—and as for me, I was born in Venice, and never loved any other home—it is there your gold shall carry me, and my pretty Laura too, Signora.”

“But I must dress this dear friend, Pedro, before you take her hence,” said Juliet; “Camilla, dearest—look up at me; will you not help me to put on the gown I have made for you?”

Camilla now looked at her stedfastly, and though there was still something painfully bewildered in the expression of her eyes, it

was quite evident she understood her. She attempted to speak, but shook her head, as if unable to do so. Juliet then proceeded to put on the dress she had prepared; Camilla raised herself up, and endeavoured to assist her, but presently ceased to do so, and putting away the hand of Juliet, she again attempted to speak, and with some difficulty articulated, "not this—not this," endeavouring at the same time to tear from her neck the tunic in which she had been interred. Juliet saw directly how necessary this was, as well for the sake of soothing poor Camilla, by ridding her of this fearful object, as to avoid the evident danger, which would arise from its being seen by others.

"Leave us for a moment, my good Pedro," said she; "lock that dreadful door, and wait at the entrance of the chapel till I call to you."

"Do not bid me lock that door, Signora," replied her thoughtful assistant, retiring as she spoke, "till you have buried within it the shroud, which the poor soul is trying to take off."

“ Indeed you are right,” replied Juliet, “ this must never see the light.”

Camilla, who was now rapidly recovering her faculties and her strength, was quickly attired, and her appearance satisfied her anxious friend. She thought it would be quite impossible for those who had only seen her in her nun’s habit, to recognise her in this dress.

Juliet, shuddering yet joyful, stepped once more within the gloomy vault, and throwing into it the hateful tunic, retreated, and locked the door.

Pedro was already by the side of Camilla, preparing carefully to support her still faltering steps, when Juliet stopped him, saying—

“ It is here, Pedro, that I must pay you the gold you have so nobly won. God bless you with it ; and may you never want at your need, such kindness as you have shown to me.”

Poor Pedro almost wept his gratitude, thanks, and blessings, in return.

“ And now, my dear Camilla, one last word to you ; after we leave the chapel, we must speak no more, till we meet again ; and that, dear

friend, I trust we shall do. Your Jacintha shall be sent to you at the house of our good Pedro's mother, where you will be lodged till she arrives. With her, I trust, you will reach England in safety. Do you remember the name of my uncle? Be sure not to forget—*Lord Arlborough*—with him you will be safe, till you shall join your husband.”

A person stronger than poor Camilla, might have found it difficult to express to Juliet what she felt at that moment. She threw her feeble arms around her, and shed on her bosom the first tears with which she had been blessed, since the frightful moment of Isidore's discovery.

“My friend! my preserver!” she murmured, but attempted not to say more; and Juliet, who felt that she was not yet out of danger, spoke not in return, but led her rapidly, by the aid of Pedro, to the outer gate of the convent; and there, after folding her once more in her arms, she resigned her to the care of her worthy guide, returning herself, with a step that seemed to tread the air, safely and unchallenged to her cell.

One must have felt anxiety as poignant as that which had been weighing on the heart of Juliet, to conceive fully the happiness she enjoyed at this moment. On the same spot where, two short hours before, she had besought Heaven for strength to carry her through her fearful enterprise, she now kneeled in happy thankfulness for its success. Could she have seen her aunt, and whispered but one word into her ear, her joy would have been perfect. But this she dared not do. The promised attendance of the Abbess of St. Ildefonse on their superior, had been published throughout the whole establishment, and Juliet could only console herself by the reflection, that the pleasure she so ardently longed for would be hers on the morrow. With this delightful certainty, she laid her weary head upon her pillow, and slept, as only those can sleep, who feel within them that—

“ Sweet peace, which goodness bosoms ever.”

CHAPTER XXX.

Not another comfort like to this succeeds in unknown fate.

SHAKESPEARE.

JULIET intended to have risen the next morning an hour earlier than usual; by which time, she thought the duty of an affectionate niece might justify an inquiry at the door of her aunt's room; but, to her utter astonishment, she slept till long after her accustomed hour of rising—she would have been vexed at this, had she not been much too joyful to be vexed at any thing; Dante says, and very truly, that there is—

———nessum maggior dolore
Che ricordarsi del tempo felice
Nella miseria.

It is a pity he did not embalm, in words as racy, the equally striking truth, that nothing is so delightful, as the recollection of misery, in the midst of happiness.

Juliet's waking was delicious. She had risen from the broken and unrefreshing sleep of the last two nights, to the dreadful consciousness of heavy misery. But now her first feeling was—that danger was past and sorrow over. Even before memory became sufficiently awake to recall the particulars of her last night's successful enterprise, she felt the satisfaction resulting from it. Dressing herself with all possible expedition, she flew to her aunt's apartment, where she knocked, and was bade to enter. She found Geraldine in bed; and the friendly Abbess of St. Ildefonse still sitting near her pillow, with two attendant nuns standing beside her.

Juliet caught the eye of her aunt—and all was told; there needed no word on either side.

Geraldine turned her head away, covering her face with her hand; and Juliet felt that she was

offering a thanksgiving to the God of mercy, for the blessing that look had brought.

Juliet respectfully saluted the kind old lady, who had watched by her aunt, and inquired if she might be permitted to supply her place, while she refreshed herself by taking breakfast.

"Surely, as her blood relation, this cannot be refused to you, my child," replied the Abbess of St. Ildefonse; "though there are many in the community, whose age might entitle them to the preference."

"How feel you, holy sister?" she continued, rising, and bending over Geraldine; "she has been grievously ill during the night, young lady; turning, tossing, muttering prayers, and starting at times as if terrified out of her wits;—no wonder—no wonder; it is easy to guess where her thoughts were wandering.—How are you, holy sister?" she repeated, taking the hand of Geraldine.

"I am much better, my kind friend," replied the Abbess of Sant' Catherina's, turning her

dark eyes, which were swimming in tears, upon her Juliet; "I am so greatly better, that I think I may venture to rise, and take my breakfast with you."

"Dear me! how wonderfully she is revived," said the old lady. "Remember this while you live, sister Agatha," she added, addressing with great earnestness one of the nuns, "that comes from mixing the julap and the cinnamon-water together. I told you, as you know, just after you had said your *Jam lucis orto sidere*, at the hour of prime this morning, that it was the weakness in the stomach, which we must attend to; and there is no medicament in the world for that, equal to cordial julap and cinnamon-water."

"I am very grateful for your kind care of me," said Geraldine, with a smile of irrepressible satisfaction; "and I really feel quite well again."

The Abbess of St. Ildefonse looked a little uneasy, and again took her hand to feel the state of her pulse.

"I do not think there is any great fever," said she; "and yet," lowering her voice to a whisper, as she addressed sister Agatha, "I think she seems wandering a little."

Meanwhile Juliet stood beside the bed, with her eyes fixed upon her aunt, looking what she might not utter, and enjoying, in return, the expression of sweet tranquillity which she had restored to her fine features.

"Shall I see that breakfast is prepared in your parlour, my dear aunt?" said Juliet.

"Do so, my child," replied Geraldine; "but first attend this holy mother thither; and be careful that she has rose-water to refresh her eyes after her long watch."

The Abbess of St. Ildefonse and Juliet retired together; and half an hour afterwards the two superiors were taking their breakfast near the pleasant window of that apartment. Two nuns were waiting upon them; and when the meal was over, the Abbess of Sant' Catherina's begged one of them to fetch her a jug of water, that she might refresh her flowers, which were withering

in the balcony for want of it. When it was brought, she took it, in order to perform the pleasant office herself; but while she was thus engaged, her sister Abbess felt utterly at a loss to conceive how such strong feeling, as she had manifested the day before, could so soon be succeeded by a degree of composure, which permitted her to attend to what seemed so frivolous.

“ Well, well,” said the good lady, addressing the nuns, “ ’tis a comfort to see that she can turn her mind away from it so soon; I wish I loved flowers, or any other thing, well enough to make me forget the horrors of yesterday !”

Soon after breakfast, the Abbess of St. Ildefonse, seeing that her patient was decidedly out of danger, prepared to take her departure; but, before she left the convent, she found an opportunity of saying privately to sister Agatha—

“ Do not forget the julap and cinnamon-water, my daughter; it is possible that towards night your holy mother may show symptoms of

a relapse. If this should happen, fail not to have recourse to this invaluable mixture."

As soon as the Abbess of St. Ildefonse had departed, all the senior nuns of the community requested in succession to wait upon their superior, that they might satisfy their anxiety respecting her health. Not one of the society but had felt a pang for her, amidst their own sorrow; and her severe illness caused a strong emotion among them all. To refuse these demonstrations of true affection, was impossible; but it cost a strong effort to poor Geraldine, to receive with the self-same courteous answers, a score of inquirers, whose presence kept her from hearing what Juliet, who stood with trembling impatience by her side, was dying to tell.

At length they were alone; and the first unrestrained interchange of feeling between them, was by a tender embrace.

"My dear, dear child!" exclaimed Geraldine, sobbing with delightful emotion. "Is it indeed possible, that you have done this thing? Is she, indeed, beyond these fearful walls?"

reely—fully—safely clear of them,” and the happy Juliet.

And you found her?—Oh, Juliet, how did you find that dreadful interval? I hardly dare to ask you, how you found her?”

And I,” replied Juliet, “can hardly tell you. Even now, that I once more feel in possession of my sober senses, which sometimes, during the last three days, I have almost lost; even now, the scene of last night comes to me like a horrid dream. But she is not that, at least, is no illusion. I watched her by the feeble light of the waning moon, leaning on the arm of Pedro; I watched them as they turned the convent wall—and trust me, she looked no more like a nun than he did. He is safe! The God of heaven be praised

”
This assurance was certainly what Juliet best needed to speak, and her aunt to hear; but it was to neither of them was weary of dwelling on all the details of the past day and night. Some dread of further danger to the object

of their care, mixed with the pleasure her escape occasioned them.

Camilla was so entirely unknown at Ancona, that her being discovered was nearly impossible; yet still Geraldine felt painfully anxious about her. It was highly probable, that, in her critical situation, the terror and misery she had endured, might have been productive of alarming results; and the idea that, in such a situation, she should be without the affection and support of a single friend, was dreadful. Juliet, however, was so eloquent in praise of Pedro, and so persuaded that his mother and his Laura must be good and kind, that she greatly alleviated her aunt's fears respecting the short interval that must elapse before the arrival of Jacintha.

It was impossible that the dreadful fate of Camilla should not long be remembered at Sant' Catherina's, with mingled emotions of sorrow and of fear; yet, in this case, as in every other, the petty interests of life's daily history soon blunted the recollection of it; and every thing within the convent seemed restored to its usual

monotonous serenity, when the news was announced, and joyfully passed from mouth to mouth through the community, that lady Juliet d'Albano's little page was returned from Rome.

Morgante brought with him a letter from the dignitary to whom he had been recommended, stating, with many thanks for the kind attention of the Abbess of Sant' Catherina's:—

“ That the boy had completely lost the power of singing, in consequence of a severe indisposition contracted on his journey; and being fretful and unhappy among the numerous retinue which formed his eminence's establishment, he had thought it best to indulge the sickly child in his wish to return to the friends of his infancy; and with that view he had remitted him to the care of his aunt, Jacintha Corri.”

This interesting letter was put into the hands of Juliet, and by her, shown in confidence to all her friends, which certainly included the whole community; so that before Morgante had been many hours returned, all the reasons of his going

and coming were most satisfactorily known throughout the convent.—Meantime, the Abbess and Juliet had the delight of hearing from him, that Jacintha was arrived, and with the most affectionate earnestness in the service of her mistress; moreover that she was, according to the judgment, and in the words of Morgante, “a bold-spirited, but gentle-hearted woman, who would be able, with the aid of her gay-hearted young son, to set dangers and difficulties at defiance.”

With this assurance they were forced to be content. A direction to the house of Pedro's mother had been slipped into the hand of Jacintha, when she waited upon the Abbess with her sickly nephew, and they heard of her no more. The possibility of attracting attention to Camilla, if by illness, or other accident, she were detained in Ancona, prevented any inquiry being made by Geraldine at the dwelling of Pedro; and painful as was the uncertainty respecting her, it was better to endure it, than to run the slightest risk of discovery.

The soldier who had escorted Morgante was

still detained in Rome, by business the Abbess had intrusted to him.

The calm which followed the violent emotions immediately succeeding Juliet's arrival at St. Catherina's, was most welcome both to Geraldine and her niece. The resolution which the Abbess had taken of resigning her situation in the convent, and finally retiring to England, to pass the remainder of her life among the relations of her mother, still continued; but it appeared that she was desirous of waiting for some weeks, before she announced her intended abdication. The interval was far from unhappy, though all Juliet's devoted confidence in her aunt, could not prevent occasional fits of anxiety respecting Hubert. Where was he?—Who was he?—What was he?

It was impossible to doubt that the Abbess could have answered all these queries; yet, though the name of Hubert was often spoken between them, though Geraldine seemed to seek, rather than shun, every conversation which led to the avowal of Juliet's tenderness for him,

the slightest hint of a wish to develope the mystery respecting him was checked by her saying, "Remember the fairy godmother's conditions, Juliet!—no inquiries must be made."

And if, after this, emboldened by the daily increasing confidence with which she was treated, Juliet ventured to persevere, and gravely confess that this reserve made her unhappy, Geraldine would break up the conference, by saying—

"Surely it is not Juliet, who would wish me to break a solemn promise?"

Notwithstanding this one little vexation, Juliet was quite ready to confess that she had never before been so happy. Not a day passed without her being conscious of acquiring information, and becoming, as she sometimes affectionately boasted, more worthy of the friendship she so dearly valued.

As to Morgante, he was very nearly as well pleased as herself; his pageship was forgotten in favour of his miniature stature; and though Marcella still interdicted the threshold of the novices' gallery, he was often per-

mitted to enter the garden at the hour of recreation, and amused himself and the holy company he found there, with a thousand apish vagaries. His journey to Rome, with the history of his two days' sojourn in the palace of the princely cardinal, were never-failing sources of gossip and amusement. With the peculiar shrewdness of his character, he marked exactly how far his pleasantries might go, without shocking the feelings of his auditors; and discovered, without any very long study, who best loved to laugh, and who to lecture; which veil hid a wit, and which a saint; and, by dint of steering himself cautiously by the chart his acuteness thus enabled him to lay down, he contrived to become the petted favourite of the whole sisterhood. His fine voice was also a valuable acquisition to the poor nuns in these hours of idleness; and he was often made to sing and chant till he was weary. When this happened, he secured himself from further importunity by gravely declaring, that he felt symptoms of the same malady which had obliged him to resign his grand situ-

ation at Rome,—a hint which never failed to bring upon him a shower of sugar-plums and cautions, “to be very careful of his voice, which was doubtless given by the especial favour of God, on purpose to sing his praises.”

On one occasion, however, the roguish page was very near getting into a serious scrape, by the indulgence of his laughter-loving humour. He was, as usual, surrounded by a large group of recluses, one evening when Juliet was passing the hour of recreation on the chapel terrace with her aunt, and therefore incapable of keeping watch over his fooleries.

As long as his young mistress was within reach, no motive was strong enough to draw Morgante from her side ; and while he remained under her eye, he seldom transgressed the limits of discretion, in his pleasantries ; but upon the evening in question, he ventured a jest that might have cost him dear.

Two of the nuns, who had voices of peculiar power and sweetness, and who, as is usual when this is the case, had been enjoined by

the superior to cultivate such a knowledge of music, as would enable them to be efficient assistants in the choir, were endeavouring to learn from Morgante an anthem which he had heard at Rome, and which his ear had perfectly retained. He had repeated this, with the words to which he had heard it applied, till he was tired, and being on this evening urged to give it again, he said—

“I think, holy ladies, that if you will be pleased to sing it with some words that I learnt in the Cardinal’s palace, you would find it easier, than the *Ad te levavi oculos*, with which you have been practising it.”

“New words, Morgante?” said the cautious sister Lucia; “are they words which the church sanctions?”

“I heard them in the Cardinal’s palace, holy sister,” replied Morgante primly, “and I am not free to doubt it.”

“Truly, he is right,” said sister Agnes, “if we may not look for holy words, in holy mouths, where may we hope to find them?”

"Nay, sister Agnes," replied the pious Lucia, "I did not mean to question it. What are these words, Morgante? I am sure I would willingly learn them, if they are not too difficult."

"I do not think you will find them so, holy sisters," said the page, in his most demure manner, "and they go most sweetly to the music."

So saying, he raised his clear voice, and sang with all its powerful distinctness, the following words:—

*"Vos monachi, vestri stomachi sunt amphora Bacchi,
Vos estis, Deus est testis, deterrima pestis *."*

"That is beautiful!" exclaimed both the musical students at once.

"I thought you would like it, holy ladies," said the little mischief, pursing up his mouth, with an air of saint-like gravity.

"I must learn it," said sister Agnes.

"Indeed, it would be a pity to lose the opportunity," rejoined Lucia.

* The literal English of which is—

Monks, your stomachs are skins of wine,
Ye are, God is witness, a most baneful pest.

“ Well, ladies, I shall be proud to teach you. Will you be pleased both of you, to say after me, Vos monachi—”

“ Vos monachi,” repeated the docile nuns.

“ Vestri stomachi.”

“ Vestri stomachi,” they continued with pious fervour.

“ Sunt amphora Bacchi,” continued Morgante with strong emphasis, which the well practised ears of his pupils enabled them to catch admirably.

“ Now sing so far, holy sisters, upon the same notes as the—*Ad te levavi, &c.*”

They did so, with great unction, and to his inexpressible delight, gave to every word the exact emphasis he had taught. Gratified by the earnest praise of Morgante, who, baby as he was, had quite sufficient reputation among them as a musician, to be accounted a competent judge, the sweet voices of the two nuns ceased not to swell into their fullest power, as they continued their ludicrous exercise; nor was the urchin satisfied, till he had taught them the

whole, impressing upon them with great earnestness, the peculiar beauty which the performance gained, by a somewhat vehement enunciation of the two last words. A graver person than Morgante might certainly have found food for mirth, in the manner with which, after this lesson, sisters Lucia and Agnes paced the alleys of the garden, arm in arm, reiterating with emulative fervour, and with all the power of their lungs—*deterrima pestis*.

It is generally acknowledged, that no situation of life, however deep its shade, can exempt the dweller in it from a wish to catch, from time to time, a passing ray of admiration. The truth of this was clearly proved in the case of our musical nuns. They longed to introduce their new anthem to other ears than those of their companions of the cloister; and accordingly, having sedulously instructed the choir in the strain, and above all in the clear pronunciation of the words, they decided upon performing it the next time the visitor and confessor attended mass in the chapel. Nor had they long to wait

for an opportunity of making the desired display. Isidore, curious to mark the impression which remained on the mind of the Abbess, from the fate of Camilla, which, though it had failed to make her betray herself according to his hope, had nevertheless, as he had been assured, nearly proved fatal to her, sent early notice of his intention to confer the honour of his presence at a Sunday mass.

Had it not been, however, for the peculiar clearness of enunciation, upon which sisters Lucia and Agnes had insisted, in their instructions to the choir upon this occasion, neither the visitor, nor the officiating priests, would have been likely to take much notice of the words; but the thundering *amphora Bacchi* and *deterrima pestis* must have roused the most slumbering attention; and, accordingly, the wondering ecclesiastics listened to, and distinguished the whole, with feelings of astonishment and indignation, which may easily be imagined.

As soon as the service was ended, Isidore

requested to see the Abbess in the parlour. She immediately complied with his wish, and found him sitting there, with the priests who had performed the mass standing behind him. She bowed to them all, and then seated herself opposite Isidore.

"Know you, holy mother," he began, "what anthem your choir favoured us with, after the *Gloria tibi, Domine*?"

"No, my lord; I am no musician, and it is sister Lucia who selects the chants and anthems."

"May I see sister Lucia immediately?"

"Assuredly, my lord."

Sister Lucia was sent for. "Be so good, my daughter," said the Abbot, "as to recite for us the words of the anthem you sung this morning."

Sister Lucia readily complied, and repeated Morgante's lines with great clearness and precision.

Isidore perceived clearly that she did not understand a word of what she uttered, and con-

tented himself with desiring she would inform him who had taught her these words.

“It was Morgante, my lord,” replied Lucia, without hesitation.

“And who may Morgante be?” inquired the Abbot, addressing himself rather to the Abbess than to her nun.

Geraldine, who had listened to her attentively, as she pronounced the absurd words of Morgante’s anthem, was both surprised and provoked in the highest degree, and resented the affront, with almost as much indignation as Isidore himself.

“Morgante, my lord,” she replied, “is an orphan boy brought up by the charity of my brother; and if sister Lucia has learned these abominable words from him, which cannot be doubted, since we have her testimony for it, he must either prove, to my entire satisfaction, that he was as ignorant of what he taught, as she of what she learnt, or—he must be dealt with as he deserves.”

“And how came he here, holy mother?”

“ I brought him from Albano, my lord, on account of his uncommonly fine voice, which I thought might make him acceptable to some friends I have in Rome.”

“ And how long has he returned from thence? —that is——” suddenly correcting himself, “if you have already sent him thither.”

“ Not more than a week, my lord. He caught a cold on the way thither, which rendered him incapable of singing; and I must now seek some other patronage for him—that is, if he clear himself of this abomination. If he do not, I shall immediately send him back to the Count d’Albano, who will know better than I can, what to do with him.”

“ He certainly appears to be a strange instructor for your nuns, holy mother,” replied the Abbot with a sneer:—“ may I be permitted to see this strange inmate of your nunnery?”

“ He is an inmate of the porter’s lodgings, my lord,” replied the Abbess; “but if it be your lordship’s pleasure, I can order the child to be brought hither.”

In a few minutes Morgante appeared, and no sooner perceived sister Lucia and the Abbot face to face, than he suspected the cause for which he had been summoned; but as fearless in temper, as ready in resource, he was nothing daunted, but prepared himself to bear patiently and to answer discreetly, whatever might be said to him.

“Was it you, child, who taught this holy nun to sing the words of the anthem which was performed in the chapel to-day?”

“Yes, my lord; so please your lordship; and the tune too,” replied Morgante, with a look inconceivably innocent.

“Know you what the words mean, boy?”

“No, your holy reverence, that’s more than I was ever taught; but I know it is something about the holy Virgin.”

It was almost impossible to avoid smiling at the extreme demureness with which Morgante uttered this; and unfortunately the eye of Isidore turned at that moment towards the Abbess, who had not been able entirely to resist it.

She immediately recovered her composure, and said—

“Where, sir, did you learn these words?”

“In the palace of my lord, the Cardinal,” replied the boy.

“How mean you, boy?” said Isidore. “Dare you say, that these vile ribald words were taught you there?”

“Not so, my lord. I think not that any one in the lord Cardinal’s household would have troubled themselves to teach me any thing. On the contrary, my lord, they seemed strangely disposed to make a mockery of my church music. But without especial teaching, please your holy lordship, I never fail to learn whatever I hear sung. But is there harm in those words, holy mother?” asked Morgante, looking at the Abbess with an air of innocent surprise.

“Yes, boy; there is much harm in them.”

“Then it was sin and shame in them, to let me hear such,” replied the child; “for they asked me where I came from, and I told them from a most holy convent; on which they

struck up this anthem (and truly the notes are musical), and one and all of them declared I looked like a little monk myself; and told me, if I was a wise child I should remember the words they had sung, and repeat them, whenever I had the honour of finding myself in company with any of the profession, and then they sang it again—giving me just so much teaching as that comes to.”

“My lord Cardinal shall learn what pestilent heretics he hath near him,” said Isidore rising.

“Take care, boy, that you are never again heard to utter such blasphemy.”

“I utter blasphemy, my lord!” cried the urchin, with well-feigned horror;—“oh! what would Father Laurence say, if he heard that!”

Without deigning to take further notice of him, Isidore turned to the Abbess, and said—

“The unfortunate women, who have been blindly led into this abomination, must confess, and receive absolution for it forthwith.—I must depart, holy mother; but I will leave brother Vincentio to perform this office. Let the whole

choir be informed of the sin they have done!"—
And turning to the priest, who was to remain,
he said—

“The seven penitential psalms, to be repeated
kneeling, should make a part of the penance,
brother.”

Then muttering a general “Benedicite,” he
withdrew.

CHAPTER XXXI.

And blindfold death, not let me see my son.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE Abbot of St. Andrea's returned from this visit more convinced than ever of the secret heresy of Geraldine. The cause of this renewed and confirmed suspicion was apparently very trifling, but the point of a needle may convey poison as effectually as the blade of a faulchion; and when the Abbess of St. Catherina's permitted a smile at Morgante's ludicrous blunder to pass across her countenance, it produced as deep disgust and rage on the mind of the bigot, as the most deliberate blasphemy could have done.

He already hated her with all the intensity of

his hard and gloomy nature. She had thwarted, defied, and baffled him, through long years of tacit struggling, and had stood the last awful proof to which he had brought her, in a manner that had even staggered his deeply-rooted belief of her secret apostacy. But all she had gained by the arduous victory over external feeling, on the day of Camilla's trial, was lost by the slight indiscretion of a single instant. The nature of this new offence was, from its very lightness, what he could least endure. To see her fall prostrate at his feet, from the agony endured by conforming her outward seeming to his inward will, had something in it that soothed his pride, and ministered to the whole knot of venomous passions which fed upon his heart;—but that she should dare in his presence to smile at a scoffing jest against his sacred calling, drove him to madness, and he left her, determined at once to hazard every thing, by an open and avowed attack upon her as a heretic.—Before he slept, the following letter was dispatched to Father Dominic.

“This accursed woman is a heretic, di Pino, a most accursed heretic—and if I let her escape me, may my soul howl in purgatory for ever!

“With art, as deep and damnable as that of her detested kinsman, she has permitted the sacrifice of the nun whom I placed in her house, though by her creed it was a heinous sin, yet still she let it be—false, even in her apostacy, she used not the slightest effort to save her. That scheme has proved abortive. I was a fool to believe her capable of sincerity, even in error.

“It is now, therefore, to you, di Pino, that I turn all my hopes. It is to you I appeal, to support the accusation you have declared yourself ready to bring against her: but the burden of the righteous labour shall be all on me. It is I who will convey the accusation to the holy tribunal at Rome—it is I who will carry it through, or perish. To you, my friend, I look as my most important witness against her. I have reconsidered all the evidence you recited to me, during your last visit, and find it so ample, so clear, and every way sufficient, that I cease

not to blame the unnecessary delay which I have permitted to impede the course of justice, while waiting for the further confirmation I expected, during the recent trial at Sant' Catherina's. But doubt and hesitation are now over, di Pino; and the long tedious years of watchful zeal which have been devoted to the discovery of this woman's crimes will now reap their reward. I wait but till I hear from you, that you are ready;—that Father Laurence, and the woman Olive of whom you spoke, shall be prepared to give, when examined, the information which will be required of them;—and that your noble penitent, the Count d'Albano, shall be in such a frame of mind as may, at least, prevent his impeding our views. This latter point is highly important, my di Pino, and if you think that I could awaken his conscience to this awful duty, more effectually than Father Laurence or yourself can do, I will visit him.

“Answer me on this without delay. Think not that the zeal I look for in you, my old and well-approved friend, shall go without reward.

Remember, di Pino, that no agent in the discovery of hidden heresy (the only crime that the church cannot pardon), was ever left without that reward and favour from the saints on earth, which is the surest forerunner of the reward and favour of Heaven.—Farewell.”

His resolution taken, Isidore, for a time, felt a degree of repose, from the removal of the uncertainty that had so long tortured him, which gave him a species of enjoyment amounting almost to happiness. His imagination revelled in the prophetic pictures it drew of his proud enemy subdued at last. He fancied he already saw her proud eye quenched in shame and suffering; already heard that voice, whose high authority had so long grated on his ear, sunk to the weak sob of female agony; and, as he dwelt upon his perfect vengeance, he was ready to allow, that years of defeated projects, and abortive hopes, would be a thousand-fold atoned for by such a termination.

While these fearful projects were gradually maturing, the unconscious object of them was assailed from another quarter by a misfortune which touched her very nearly.

About a month after the escape of Camilla from Sant' Catherina's, the Abbess was sitting with Juliet, in her own apartment, when she was told that a monk, who said he had travelled from a distance, begged to see her on important business. She went immediately to the public parlour of the convent, and to her great surprise saw Father Laurence standing outside the grate. She perceived at once that he brought melancholy news, for his countenance wore that decent air of regulated sorrow, which is intended to announce such. Geraldine's first idea was, that her brother was dead; but Father Laurence, in answer to her general inquiry, corrected her mistake, by uttering an ardent thanksgiving for the continued life and health of his illustrious patron.

"And may the holy company of saints, whose blessed office it is to watch over piety and gra-

ciousness on earth, long spare your noble brother to us, holy mother !”

“ Amen !” was the only reply of Geraldine.

“ But alas !” continued Father Laurence in a piteous whine—“ his lovely heir—the hope of your ancient house—is gone ! The angels, and archangels, have taken him back amongst them !”

“ Dead ?” exclaimed Geraldine with much emotion, “ Ferdinand dead ?—Sweet boy—he was too frail a flower to live ! and yet—I had little thought he would have gone so soon.”

In answer to her inquiries as to the manner of his death, Father Laurence informed her, that “ the boy had evidently pined, after the departure of his sister and Morgante.—At first no alarm was felt respecting him, but he gradually lost his appetite, his sleep, and his strength, from the day they left Albano,—and about a week ago, to the surprise of the whole household, took to his bed and died, after a low but rapid fever of a few days’ continuance.”

The Abbess shed some natural tears for the

early fate of one so near to her blood; and painfully anticipating the task of breaking it to Juliet, she was preparing to leave Father Laurence, recommending him to the hospitality of St. Andrea's, when that holy man stopped her by saying:—

“Not yet, holy mother;—I have not done my message to you.—This grievous news might have been brought to you by letter, or by one more easily spared from the castle, at such a moment, than your poor servant: but my business is to take back the Lady Juliet, now sole heiress of her noble house, to her afflicted father—and in this, holy mother, I may make no delay—not even to turn aside for the benefit of visiting the holy community of St. Andrea's. My orders are precise—the Lady Juliet must depart instantly, in a litter which waits in readiness, within the court,—your noble brother not choosing to trust the uncertain gales which might oppose the speed of her return by sea,—and not willing to lose the time necessary to obtain from Heaven by prayer, the wind that might waft her to his

doating arms with least delay.—Wherefore I will beg it of your courtesy, to hasten the illustrious damsel with all convenient speed. Her waiting-woman stays without, in case her services can any way assist the needful preparations.”

This was a stroke which poor Geraldine was not prepared for. Her affection for Juliet had completely overcome the tranquil torpidity of heart, into which she had schooled herself; and the wish of living with her, and for her, had taken such hold of her imagination, that this sudden destruction of all her hopes quite overpowered her. She left the parlour, without saying a word in answer to this intelligence, and retired to her cell, that she might recover some degree of composure before she sought Juliet.

Meanwhile Olive had made her way into the very heart of the convent, and was already surrounded by her dear friends, sisters Beatrice, Clara, and Johanna, while the venerable Martha occupied herself in seeking to return the late

hospitality of Olive, in kind. There was more to be asked, and answered, on both sides, besides the necessary refreshment after the fatigues of a three days' journey, than could be easily got through, in the time allowed by Father Laurence for their continuance at Sant' Catherina's, and the gabble which ensued amongst them, showed how anxious they were to dispatch it within the prescribed period.

Juliet, totally ignorant of their arrival, had become so interested in a volume she was reading, as to have quite forgotten why her aunt had left her, or that she had said, as she did so, that she should return to her immediately. She was stationed near the balcony which overlooked the garden, when her attention, deeply as it was rivetted on her book, was called from it by the unusual clamour of tongues which she heard from below.

"She must see the garden," said sister Johanna.

"And the fruit trees," added sister Beatrice.

"Do run, sister Clara, will you now, and ask

for the key for a stranger.—Old Jacobo can hardly refuse it.”

“See, see,” cried Beatrice, “there are a dozen of the sisters coming to us, Signora, who will all want to talk to you; but you must stay with your old friends, you know, when you have got such a very short time to be with us.”

Juliet felt some curiosity to know who this stranger visitor might be, and she stepped out upon the balcony to reconnoitre. It was in vain, however, that she tried to penetrate the crowd of veiled heads, which encircled Olive; she only perceived that there was a female among them, in a black dress, though evidently not a religious habit. Giving up the attempt to see her face, Juliet quietly reseated herself, and had again returned to her book, when the voice of Olive reached her ear.

“And pray, how does our young lady do? I declare I was so delighted to see you all, that I never had the grace to ask for her before.”

Juliet again stepped into the balcony, and to her utter astonishment, saw Olive in deep

mourning, but with a countenance gay in smiles, looking up towards the window where she stood. The moment she caught her mistress's eye, however, the smiles vanished, and with a look more accordant to her dress, she saluted Juliet with an air that was intended to indicate both profound respect and sorrow. But both were equally unintelligible to Juliet, who returned her salutation by an eager inquiry for her father and "dear Ferdinand."

Olive drew forth her handkerchief, and applied it to her eyes.

"Holy Virgin!" exclaimed Juliet, "what is the matter, Olive? You are come to bring me some dreadful news! Speak, is it not so?"

"Oh, Signora! your poor dear brother—"

"My dear Ferdinand!" exclaimed Juliet—"Oh, Olive, why did you not send to ask for me?"

"I thought, Signora, that your holy aunt, the lady Abbess, would be the fittest person to tell you the sad news—Father Laurence is with her."

Juliet sat down, and wept bitterly. She felt as if she had never loved the sweet boy enough—she remembered his innocent fondness, his engaging gentleness, his winning beauty : and when, at length, her aunt entered to break to her, as cautiously as might be, the sad and sudden tidings, she found her in a state that at once showed the news had already reached her.

Their tears flowed together, but not from the same cause ; Juliet was as yet totally unconscious of the change this event was to make in her whole destiny ; and when Geraldine repeated the urgent orders of the Count for her immediate return, her grief at the separation from her aunt knew no bounds.

“ He will lose me, too, then !” she passionately exclaimed. “ My aunt !—I cannot live without you ——”

“ What will my fate be, Juliet ? so lately found——must I regret that I have ever known you ?”

“ How is all this to end ?” cried the poor girl. “ Will you then go to England ?—You must

leave me behind—I cannot now leave my poor father.”

“Juliet, I will never leave you, I cannot remain here; I am no longer capable of contenting myself with the existence I have hitherto led; you have shown me that I may still be happy. Dearest Juliet, I will obtain leave from Rome to resign my station; we shall meet ere long; you cannot, as you truly say, now leave Albano; but I will see you there, and that as speedily as possible. I need not now wait for the intelligence I looked for—every thing is changed.”

Juliet looked earnestly in the face of her aunt, to ascertain, if possible, what change she spoke of; but her eyes were turned away, and she could only see that, be it what it might, it was a source of uneasiness.

The present moment was too painful for either of them to wish it prolonged, even had it been in their choice; but the impatience of Father Laurence, who had spent the short interval they were together in seeking Morgante, and bidding him prepare for the journey, now caused him to

dispatch a message that hastened their separation; and before either Geraldine or her niece had recovered the first effect of this stunning blow, they were already some miles asunder.

Morgante was grieved in heart at the loss of his little play-fellow; but, in truth, he felt much consolation upon finding, that it would occasion him immediate remission from the bondage of St. Catherina's. His jokes had become all "stale, flat, and unprofitable," and since the affair of the anthem, he had found his holy patronesses much less inclined to profit by his various accomplishments, than before. In short, he anticipated the freedom of Albano, its woods, its cliffs, and its flowery knolls, with delight. Poor Juliet could not share his feelings; Albano had never been a happy home to her, and now she felt that it would be still less so. Hitherto her days had passed cheerlessly there, from the want of companions and friends; but now she was to feel the bitter sorrow of having lost by death one of the few objects she had ever loved. The light step of her little brother would no longer en-

liven the long gloomy galleries ; and her stranger friend, *Hubert*, as she had now learned to call him, who, for a few short months of her existence, had shed light, life, warmth, and animation over the dull, cold history of her existence, he, too, was lost to her, and probably for ever ; for to what else could those ominous words of her aunt refer—" Every thing is changed !"—" Changed, indeed !" thought Juliet ; " and I, too, am changed, and a thousand times less fit to endure the dull cold life of Albano, than I was before I left it."

These painful meditations were too heavy upon her spirits, to permit her finding consolation from the remarkable increase of respect towards her, which she observed in the manners both of Father Laurence and Olive. Instead of the tone of instruction and rebuke, to which she had been accustomed from the one, and the pert flippancy of unchecked familiarity, to which she had been obliged to submit from the other, she was now treated by both as a person only second in consequence to the Count himself.

Indifferent as she was to this change, it was too obvious not to attract her attention; but the smile, which such a display of paltry feeling might be well calculated to excite, was turned to a sigh, as she recollected the cause of it.

Not all the sedulous attention of her obsequious companions could prevent the journey from being one of fatigue and heaviness; and when Juliet reached the castle, she felt so thoroughly unwell, that nothing but a strong feeling of duty could have prevented her immediately retiring to bed.

She found her father, as she expected, in a state of the most clamorous grief; but the expression of it was mingled with protestations of his devoted affection to herself. His conversation, indeed, was a sort of see-saw between his despair for the loss of his son, and his expectation of happiness from the recovered presence of his daughter.

"No father ever lost so fair a son—the united world cannot produce his equal," said he; "but at least," he continued, a moment after, "it may

be the boast of Albano, that if its male line hath failed, its ancient possessions will descend upon one who will make the glory and the pride of, I trust, the noblest husband in Italy."

Juliet, who really felt the most tender pity for her father's loss, exerted herself with unvarying sweetness to console him for it; but though his pride was continually soothed by anticipations of the prodigious alliance he intended she should make, it was very evident to all who saw him, that his son's death had given him a shock which he would never recover.

His character, naturally feeble and fretful, now became so querulous as seriously to affect his health. The most trifling thing that thwarted his humour, he declared to have been caused by disrespect, on account of the approaching annihilation of his race; and his contradictory caprices, in regard to poor Juliet, almost wore her to death. Sometimes he ordered the whole household to attend him, and formally presenting Juliet to them, as their liege lady, commanded that she should be treated in every respect as if

she were already the sole representative of his noble house. This ceremony was repeated three times in the course of the week after her return. Sometimes he would burst into a fit of uncontrollable rage, because he fancied that they treated her with more love and reverence than they had ever shown to his lamented son.— Father Laurence assured Olive, that his patron could, in his present melancholy condition, afford ample employment to at least three confessors :— “ For,” said he, yawning, “ what with hearing his confessions, and granting absolutions, administering spiritual consolation, by promising a high station in heaven to him; and temporal comfort, by prophesying a high station on earth to his daughter, I am so completely tired by the time the day is done, that were it not for the Count’s fancy of lying late in bed of a morning, I really do think I must give up my place.”

Olive sympathized with him most feelingly, declaring that it was quite impossible for flesh and blood to bear it much longer.

“ Fool that I was,” she continued, “ I fan-

ciéd it was a fine piece of promotion for me to have an heiress to wait upon, instead of a little fool of a girl that was to be packed off to a nunnery; and so it might, if our queer old Count would but let her alone, for she is not one to give herself airs; I must say that for her; and never spoke to me more kindly in her life than since she has been lady, as one may say, of all this ground, castle, and estate; but my lord's whims are quite unbearable, Father Laurence; and if you don't put him upon a little penitence, or something of that sort, I really think I must go home to my mother. It quite makes me ill that's the real truth; and you know, Father Laurence, I never was very strong."

It was small comfort to poor Juliet, during these tedious days of unvarying dullness, but ever new vexations, that she was reminded from morning to night of her own increased importance; never did any one among the throngs of dignity-burdened mortals, who walk the earth, feel so oppressed by their load as Juliet. The long harangues upon her present station and her

future prospects were not only to be heard, but answered.

“Is it not a blessing, lady Juliet?” said the pompous old man,—“is it not a blessing, that you had not completed your noviciate before this heavy stroke fell upon our house?”

“Certainly, Sir,” she replied.

“Does not your ladyship feel the immense importance which attaches to your person under the present circumstances? Are you fully aware of this, lady Juliet?”

“I hope so, Sir.”

“You answer well; God forbid it should be otherwise! I should believe the earth itself was drawing near its final dissolution, if I saw the slightest reason to fear, that the heiress of Albano was unconscious of the high destiny to which it hath pleased God and the holy Virgin to call her. Give me the satisfaction of hearing you avow your feelings on this subject.”

“It shall be the study of my life, my dearest father, on this, and every other subject, to render

my feelings exactly such as you would wish them to be."

"Your answer, lady Juliet, gives evidence of the noble race you spring from; but, speaking of your noviciate, lady Juliet, I do not think your having taken the vows would have been any lasting impediment to the lofty views I have naturally formed for you. His Holiness has too just a value for the noblest blood in Italy, to have permitted its last hope to wither in the cloister. Do you not feel persuaded that this would have been the case?"

Yet it was not alone the extreme weariness of Juliet under these persecuting interrogatories, (though this certainly had its effect), which led her at length to meditate upon the possibility of changing the state of things that produced it. The evident suffering of her father, under the affliction that had fallen upon him, which, in spite of all the consolation he laboured to draw from the anticipation of her future greatness, was evidently wearing his life away, was certainly

the primary source of the idea which suggested itself to her for his relief.

“Why,” thought Juliet, “should not my father marry again? I need be no burden upon him. The ample fortune which my aunt inherited from her mother, will enable her to take me off his hands; he is still far from aged; and if he listen to this proposal, life will again open before him with hope and gladness—while I—every thing would again be changed, and my aunt might still be the fairy god-mother who should rule my destiny.”

Such were the meditations of Juliet; and after weighing them for several days, she determined to speak on the subject to her father, in the manner most likely to soothe his feelings, and excite his hopes.

With this view, she rather encouraged than checked the melancholy train of thoughts into which he fell, on observing some toy of his lost Ferdinand’s lying among the flowers in the garden, where she was walking with him.

Instead of answering, as she usually did, by

expressing her hope that time would soften his grief, she dilated upon the inevitable extinction of their ancient name, observing, that however well she might marry in accordance with his wishes, the name of Albano would not thereby be saved from perishing.

“And wherefore point that out to me, wretched girl?” cried the Count, giving way to a violent paroxysm of sorrow: “do you think I forget it for a single moment? Do you think I can look at the walls of my castle—at the arms of my ancestors—or even at the marble tombs that have covered their honoured relics for ages, without feeling the pang of knowing, that when I lie down beside them, our house, our honours, aye, and our very graves, must pass into the hands of a stranger?”

“It is, indeed, a mournful idea, my dear father,” replied Juliet; “so mournful, that I own I am surprised you have never turned your attention to the only means of averting it.”

“What means? Speak, child,—what means

have I, that can avert the stroke of fate—avert it! alas! it has already fallen.”

“My dear father,” said Juliet, half frightened at her undertaking; “may I speak to you freely, the thoughts which this sad event has given rise to?”

“Yes, lady Juliet, speak what you will,—but as for comfort—you have not the power to give it.”

“But Heaven has, my dear father,” she replied. “Why should you not again marry?—Why should you not again become the father of a boy so lovely as our poor Ferdinand?”

The Count stopped short, and fixed his eyes upon her with an expression of almost comic admiration.

“Heaven surely speaks by your organs, my daughter! You have the face of an angel; and, I well believe, the wisdom of one. It should seem as if the holy Virgin herself had inspired you, my child; doubtless, it is her will, that you should still be one of the cloistered maids, who give their holy lives to sing her praise!”

“That part of the arrangement,” thought Juliet, “may be settled afterwards;” but delighted to find her undertaking so infinitely easier than she expected, she hastened, with renewed hopes, to strengthen the impression she had made.

It was, however, quite unnecessary to do so. It is certain that this bright idea, obvious as it was, had never occurred to the mind of the Count. When he lost his son, he began to think of his daughter; and his entire intellect had been occupied by considering, what marriage for her was within his power to arrange, which would give the greatest gratification to his vanity.

But that the marriage should be arranged for himself instead, was a prodigious improvement upon this; and no sooner had he conceived the notion, than he became an altered man. His step, as he returned to the castle, was again firm and stately; he was once more rather taller than nature intended; and the voice, with which he ordered a servant he encountered at the door, to

send Father Laurence to him, was as proud as if he were already the father of as many sons as Priam.

The Confessor obeyed the summons with the mournful, cat-like step, which had become general throughout the castle. Since the death of the young heir, no one, in the presence of the Count, had ever spoken, excepting in a whisper, and no one had moved, but with the cautious stillness that befits the chamber of death.

Father Laurence, accordingly, opened the door, as if fearing the sound should jar the nerves of his sick and captious patron, and great indeed was his surprise, when he was greeted by a loud and almost cheerful—

“Come in, good Father; come in.”

Well practised, as was our good-hearted friend, in divining the wishes, and catching the tone of the Count, he was on this occasion utterly thrown out, and ventured upon no nearer approach to sympathy, than by a sort of gentle smile, which might, with propriety, have been accompanied

by the words, "I think you seem better," if addressed to a dying man.

"I wish, Father Laurence, you would see that Bernardo takes good care of my jennet," began the inspired nobleman; "as to the housings, I will have them new; crimson and gold, remember; let the order be sent to Venice without delay; and let Olive be told, that she must be mindful of the laces for my ruffs."

Father Laurence stood before the Count, as he gave these orders, with the air of a man too much surprised even to attempt comprehending the meaning of what he heard.

The Count perceived his astonishment, and feeling the more displeased at it, from the consciousness that it was reasonable, exclaimed in no very gentle accent:—

"Why stare you so wildly, sir? Does your wisdom suppose, that because the heart of a tender father has, for a time, been in sorrow for a dear son's loss, he must, therefore, never ride on horseback more?"

“ I rejoice, my son—” began Father Laurence cautiously.

“ Well, well,” interrupted the animated Count, “ I hope you will rejoice. Let my steward know that I must have the price of the herds he is about to sell, with as little delay as possible; and look you, Father Laurence, let me have the mirror which hangs in the late Countess’s closet removed into my own—and—I shall want my beard trimmed to-morrow.”

Father Laurence retired from the presence of his patron without uttering a word, and instantly sought lady Juliet, to whom he described the very singular change which had taken place in the manner and appearance of her father, hinting his fear, that the great sorrow which had lately fallen upon him, had probably unsettled his brain.

Juliet could with difficulty preserve her gravity, as she listened to this statement; but truly rejoiced to find that her counsel was likely to produce such immediate effect, she thought it advisable to remove the mist which enveloped the

faculties of Father Laurence, by telling him that from what had passed between her father and herself that morning, she had reason to hope it was his purpose to seek consolation for his loss—

“By devoting himself to the cloister!” cried Father Laurence, eagerly interrupting her; “it is just what I expected; dear, pious nobleman! he must indeed be well prepared with gold; there be many things that will be needful for him; there is the offering for the altar; and the usual fee for the lay brethren; besides the donations and benefactions, and——”

Juliet could resist no longer, but burst into so uncontrollable a fit of laughter, that Father Laurence stood perfectly confounded, and began to suspect, that some mental infirmity had attacked both father and daughter.

A few moments, however, sufficed to make him understand the nature of the consolation, which it was the purpose of his noble penitent to seek; but he was scarcely disposed to believe Juliet in her right senses, when he perceived that she

appeared sincerely delighted at the prospect of an event, which would be likely to rob her of all the advantages she had gained by the death of Ferdinand.

Her joy, however, was as lasting as sincere ; and never was a disinterested act more immediately productive of good results to the doer of it, than was this of Juliet. Her father, entirely occupied in preparing for the nuptials which he only waited for the expiration of his first mourning to arrange, gave her no trouble or embarrassment whatever ; she was mistress of her time, and of the seat under the chestnut-tree ; and though every hour seemed two, which passed without receiving tidings of her aunt, they were cheered by hope, and occupied by delightful plans for the future.

CHAPTER XXXII.

I will put off my hope, and keep it no longer for my flatterer.

SHAKESPEARE.

THE messenger who conveyed the letter of the Abbot of St. Andrea's to Father Dominic, brought back the following answer to it, with as little delay as possible.

“ MOST HONOURED FRIEND,

“ It was without any feeling of surprise, that I learnt what the conduct of the Abbess of Sant' Catherina's had been, on the occasion of immuring the nun Camilla. Though personally a stranger to this most pestilent hypocrite, I have

heard enough of her, both from you, and from others, to be fully aware of her real character. Forgive me, my brother, if I even venture to suggest that it is possible I may know this Abbess still better than you do. Notwithstanding the atrocious wickedness which, doubtless, you so justly attribute to her, I am well assured that her weakness is that of a child in all that concerns the sufferings which it is the duty of the church to inflict on offenders. Wherefore I do not believe, whatever you may have seen or heard to the contrary, that the nun Camilla really did suffer execution in her convent. There is one amongst us who knows this Geraldine d'Albano well; one Francesco Garroni; he is a lay brother of our community, and has for many years filled the place of manciple at Santa Croce, but formerly was a serving man in the castle d'Albano.

“ This man knew Geraldine d'Albano from the hour of her birth, to that in which she left her father's castle, to take the vows at Sant' Catharina's; and upon my examining him as to her

natural temper, strength of mind, and the like, he gave me such an account of her, as to convince me that on this point you are mistaken.

“ You state explicitly, my brother, that the event is over; trust me, if this be so, she has found some means of eluding your vigilance. Be not satisfied with having seen the sentence performed before your eyes, unless you have most certain proof, that no opportunity of saving the criminal could occur afterwards. I know nothing of the localities of Sant’ Catharina’s, and can therefore give no opinion as to the possibility or impossibility of this; but you are in full possession of all the information necessary to form a judgment on the subject; and I earnestly counsel you, my brother, not to suffer any thing short of absolute certainty, to convince you that the nun Camilla has actually perished in the way you suppose. May I be right in my suspicions! and may you, my brother, find means to discover that I am so! think of the inevitable perdition such a

every would bring upon her; think of the attitude due to him, who should make the discovery of such appalling dereliction of duty in a man, who has lorded it thus long among the best and the holiest of the church! My mother, my heart glows with holy joy as I think of this; listen then to your poor friend, (if the faintest shadow of possibility attaches to this suspicion, sift it to the bottom—so shall the righteous flourish, and sinners perish in the day!) For all that concerns my testimony, be sure I will be such as you wish to find it. I have no doubt, that a proper examination could be made to produce much that might be useful, to the Confessor, and the servant Olive; therefore I would have them summoned, as you desire; but as to the Count, I doubt if he could either aid, or mar your purpose. He is ever a weak-minded man, though a devout Catholic; and, since the death of his heir, is said to have fallen into great feebleness both of body and mind. I shall be in waiting to receive and obey the summons of the holy office, and will

be careful that the witnesses from the castle shall not be delayed.—Farewell.”

On reading this letter—Isidore’s emotions were so strong, that his first action was to rise and fasten the bolt of his door, that no eye might penetrate his sanctuary, before he had subdued them. This done, he gave himself up, for a few short moments, to an intensity of enjoyment that he had not tasted for years—“Admirable di Pino !” he exclaimed in extacy, “thou shalt be great for this.—What strange, and almost fatal blindness has been upon me ! Di Pino, I will be true to thee—thou art my good angel, and I will have thee ever near me—yet has she used art, little short of magic, if she has done it—that fainting then was feigned—she must have hid herself within the chapel—Woman—Devil—whatever thou art, ’tis strange if thou canst now escape me !”

This letter reached Isidore at night, and it was not without a strong effort, that he determined to wait till morning for the examination his soul thirsted to make.

As early on the following day, as it was possible to present himself at Sant' Catherina's, the Abbot was before the gates—he was shown to the parlour, and Geraldine immediately obeyed his request to see her.

He addressed her with even more than usual courtesy, and inquired for her health with tedious particularity, that he might have time to read, in the sweet composure of her noble countenance, the peace and tranquillity which proclaimed her guilt.

Having enjoyed this study as long as he wished, he addressed her in an accent of more than ordinary gentleness, saying :—

“ My reason for intruding upon you at this early hour, holy mother, is that I might state to you, with the least possible loss of time, some rather alarming information which I received last night respecting the foundations of this building,—some fishermen told the servants of St. Andrea's, who very properly brought the intelligence to me, that there are symptoms of the sea-wall beneath the chapel-terrace giving

way—this is alarming, and must be looked to, without loss of time.”

Geraldine turned very pale, but rallied instantly, and said with sufficient earnestness to account for the emotion she was aware of having shown :—

“I trust our beautiful chapel is not endangered by it? at all events, my lord, I will send immediately for workmen to examine it.”

“You will do well, holy mother,” replied the Abbot; “but I will beg you instantly to order that torches be made ready to attend me; my duty requires that I should myself examine accurately the state of the vaults, which support the chapel-terrace; your illness, holy mother, prevented my returning to you the key of these dungeons, on the night we had occasion to use them, and I have it ready.”

Geraldine felt that all was lost.

She remained silent and motionless in her chair, as if fixed there by the spell of an enchanter; while, drawing himself up to the fullest extent of his lofty stature, Isidore stood before

her, delaying for an instant the last full assurance of his triumph, that he might enjoy the delicious spectacle of her abasement.

At last then, he saw this proud and hated woman within his grasp—at last, he saw the eye of his enemy sink beneath his own.

For one short moment she felt wholly subdued, and that moment was a bitter one—but the weakness lasted no longer. She remembered that the threatened danger would fall upon herself alone;—she remembered that Juliet was safe,—and Camilla free. Her wonted spirit again rose within her, and the same smile of cold contempt, that had so often maddened him, again curled her lips, as she replied:—

“Your lordship’s watchfulness for our convent’s safety demands my grateful thanks. Our servants shall attend you.”

She was about to leave the room, but turned back, when he answered, “I need not trouble your people, holy mother—I come provided with my own—all that I need, is light to assist our examinations. Be pleased to order that the

torches be made ready,—and perhaps, holy mother, you will do me the favour of receiving my report in person.”

The Abbess bowed, and left the room without any further reply.

As she passed along the passage that led from the parlour to the stairs, she saw from a window, which opened upon the inner court of the convent, that several men were stationed within it. This unusual intrusion at once announced to her the fact, that Isidore had come fully prepared to find that Camilla had escaped, and to secure immediately the person suspected of having assisted her in doing so:—that she herself must necessarily be the first object of such suspicion, could not for a moment be doubted: but it was not this, that once more shook the courage of Geraldine—her thoughts instantly turned to Camilla—Had she then been discovered? was she again within the power of the church? Had all the danger risked, and the misery suffered for her, been in vain?

It was almost impossible to doubt, that such was in truth the sad result of poor Juliet's heroic action ; and so heavily did this persuasion rest on the mind of Geraldine, that her own share in the danger was almost forgotten, till a fresh intimation that the Abbot of St. Andrea's waited to see her, recalled her attention to herself.—As she again walked through the passage that led to the parlour, she heard, through an open window which looked into the court, where Isidore's attendants still stood with their glaring torches in their hands, the raised voice of one of the grooms, who communicated, in terms of coarse jesting to his fellows, the discovery they had made. Had she doubted her fate, his words would have proclaimed it. When the Abbess again entered the parlour, Isidore was pacing the floor of it, with a hurried and unequal step, wholly unlike his usual still and tranquil demeanour. He turned towards her, as she entered ; but it was in vain that he struggled to assume the tone and manner which the circumstances of the moment seemed to demand ; unquenchable triumph

gleamed from his deep-set eye; his voice faltered, his words were unconnected, and scarcely audible; and Geraldine stood before him, unable to discover what his immediate purpose was respecting her.—For a moment he ceased his efforts to speak, and remained silently gazing upon her; then suddenly exerting himself to conquer the emotion that had overpowered him, he said, in a voice loud and deep, yet still trembling with ill-disguised exultation,—“Woman! you are my prisoner.”

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Past, and to come, seem best ; things present, worst.

SHAKSPEARE.

WITHIN four and twenty hours after the scene described in the last chapter, the Abbess of Sant' Catherina's found herself alone, in a close litter, on her way to Rome. The only favour granted her, and indeed the only one she had asked, was permission to see her Confessor before she left her convent ; probably, as she remarked, for ever. Had not this request been made in the presence of many witnesses, among whom were two officers of the Inquisition, it may be doubted if her triumphant enemy would have granted it. As it was, however, after the hesitation of a moment,

he permitted Father Anselmo to be sent for; and the good man was closeted with Geraldine for the space of half an hour, immediately before her departure.

Father Anselmo had for many years been intimately known, and highly respected by the Abbess.

To discuss theological questions, made no part of the Confessor's duty, with a penitent holding such station as that of Geraldine; and if the absolution she regularly received from him could not, according to her sounder judgment, convey all he intended it should bestow; if it was in the solitude of her own chamber, that her heart poured forth its full confession to her Maker, and rested its hopes of absolution only on the promised mercy of her Saviour, their mutual esteem was no way lessened by the unavowed difference in their opinions.

Geraldine knew Father Anselmo to be a truly pious, benevolent, and virtuous man; and his judgment of her was founded on an intimate knowledge of her pure and righteous conduct, in

the important situation she filled. Esteem and attachment, equally well-founded, and equally cordial, existed between them; and this interview proved the sincerity of it on both sides.

A solitary journey of many days, under such circumstances as those in which Geraldine left Sant' Catherina's, would have subdued the spirits and shaken the courage of most women, but on her, its effect was otherwise. Her life had been such as to temper her mind to the sustaining firmly whatever shock it could encounter; and the hoarded comfort of her true religion gave her a strength of endurance which almost defied the power of fortune to subdue.—Isidore grieved that both the dignity of his rank, as the mitred Abbot of St. Andrea's, and the hallowed mystery of his office in the Inquisition, alike prevented his being in the train that guarded Geraldine. He grieved to lose the view of those sufferings he loved to picture to his fancy; but could his eye have followed her from the beginning of her journey to the end of it, he would have found more food for wonder than for exultation.

On arriving at Rome, the Abbess was lodged, with the observance befitting her rank, in a handsome but remote dwelling, which, while it allowed all the attendance required by ceremony, permitted also the accommodation of a guard, sufficiently numerous to have defeated the operations of a whole host of traitors. The only female permitted to approach her was an old woman, who either being, or affecting to be, totally deaf, remained for a great part of every day in a corner of the room in which Geraldine sat, without returning any other answer to all she said than a low moaning, which seemed to indicate suffering, or annoyance from being questioned. At night the Abbess was permitted to be alone; but the change of sentinels every two hours outside her door, sufficiently indicated the care with which she was guarded. All communication from without was rigorously interdicted. She asked the servant who brought her meals, to furnish her with the materials for writing, but he only shook his head in reply. A tedious week, which not even the philosophy of Geraldine could rob

of its leaden slowness, wore wearily away, and still the noble prisoner heard nothing of her accuser, her trial, or her crime.

Bartone, meanwhile, encountered more difficulty than he had anticipated, in conveying to those before whom he had laid his accusation, such an impression concerning his prisoner, as it was absolutely necessary to his views that they should receive, before she should be brought to trial.

He had arrested, and conveyed her as a prisoner to Rome, upon his own authority, as an inquisitor, holding a high station in the holy tribunal; and the power with which he was invested, fully justified him in doing so. But beyond this point, he could no longer act alone; and to his bitter mortification he found, at the first discussion, which took place in the congregation of the holy office, after the accusation against the Abbess of Sant' Catherina's had been received, that the general feeling of the brethren was strongly in her favour, and that the accusation was considered as being, probably, the result

of mistake, under circumstances evidently of great difficulty. Isidore dared not be too absolute in opposing this opinion.

The holy office was, at least, as jealous in protecting true catholics, especially when high in station, as vehement in the prosecution of heretics; and to impeach the sanctity and honour of Geraldine d'Albano, would be, as more than one cautious inquisitor argued, giving a stab to themselves.

But Isidore was not a man who could be listened to without effect; and the opinions of the congregation were greatly divided on the question before them, which was, whether or not Geraldine d'Albano should be summoned to stand her trial before the holy office, for aiding the escape of a condemned nun from her convent.

The congregation of the holy office met at Rome three times in every week; and on the meeting which took place on Thursdays, the Pope himself always assisted in person. The office of Grand Inquisitor had been long abolished, from its being found to interfere too

much with the functions of the supreme power, and its authority was now vested in the cardinals, whose decisions came under the cognizance of his Holiness.

At the two first meetings, which succeeded Geraldine's arrival in Rome, the Pope was not present; but on the following Thursday, he appeared as usual; and when the question was again started, gave it as his decided opinion, that the interests of the Romish Church could in no way be advanced by bringing to trial one of the most esteemed and respected dignitaries it could boast. He refused his belief in the possibility of her guilt, but avowed that this was not the ground of his objection. The conviction of such an offender being, as his Holiness remarked, calculated to bring infinitely more mischief to the church, than the punishment of a hundred obscure heretics, to bring good.

The substance of this argument was too accordant to the feelings and judgments of the cardinals and monks, who constituted the congregation, not to be received with as much

genuine approbation for its own sake, as respectful deference for the quarter whence it came; and Isidore trembled as he saw his full-blown hopes, thus blighted and withering before his eyes.

It had originally been his intention to let the recorded accusation against the Abbess relate solely to the escape of Camilla, keeping the evidence of di Pino, and his associates, to be brought forward in proof of general depravity, for the purpose of increasing the detestation of her judges, and consequently the severity and contumely of her sentence. But he now found it would be necessary that the statements Father Dominic was keeping in reserve against her, should be communicated in the form of a distinct accusation by di Pino himself; and as he was not yet arrived in Rome, the Abbot appeared to yield implicitly to the opinion of his Holiness, (for it was only uttered as such, and by no means as a judgment), deciding that the affair should rest in silence, while he awaited the coming of his confederate.

Geraldine suffered severely from this prolonged confinement; another week had now nearly worn away, and her situation continued exactly the same. There is, perhaps, nothing more difficult to bear, than long enduring suspense, especially if it fall upon us when the mind has no external object on which to fix itself: nothing weighs so heavily upon the spirits, as a vacuum; and the Abbess felt more worn by misery during this fortnight's profitless seclusion, than in the fearful terror of her first alarm, or even during the awful scenes which succeeded it.

That Juliet was ignorant of her situation, was, perhaps, the most agreeable reflection that diversified the melancholy reveries of Geraldine, and the great improbability that any tidings of it could reach her, prevented her feeling any immediate anxiety on her account. It was fortunate that this persuasion had so strongly impressed itself upon her; for could she have figured to herself the real situation of Juliet, her own would have been wretched indeed. We left her joyfully anticipating the renewed happiness of

her father, and though the demonstrations of his own agreeable prognostics were sometimes so whimsical, as to draw a smile from her, and a hearty laugh from Morgante, there was enough of serious consolation in the affair, to induce her seriously to promote it, by every means in her power :—the fair lady was already chosen—proposals sent to her family—the wardrobe of the Count as splendidly renewed as his mourning would permit, and himself almost persuaded, that the symptoms of ill health, which had long been growing upon him, were all to be chased by the happy union he contemplated.

In the midst of this general contentment, a letter arrived by an express for Father Laurence. The moment the messenger had delivered it at the gate of the castle, he rode off, nor was there any means by which Father Laurence, or his friends, could discover whence, or from whom it came.

The contents of it, however, which the Confessor immediately communicated to the family, were such as to plunge them into a state of

anxiety that instantly caused all other interests to be forgotten. The letter was as follows :—

*To the holy Father Laurence, Confessor at the
Castle d' Albano.*

“ REVEREND FATHER,

“ I have that to tell, which it dearly imports your patron, the Count d'Albano, to know ; that I tell you not from whence this intelligence comes, cannot, in reason, affect your belief in it, inasmuch as the truth may easily be learned by inquiry.

“ The holy and most excellent Abbess of Sant' Catherina's is fallen into dire distress, being accused of having assisted in the escape of a nun condemned for breach of vows. I do most truly hold her innocent of this ; and though it be not consistent with my own safety to stir too openly in the matter, I will suffer nothing that I can do, to be wanting, in order that such her innocence shall appear.

“ She was yesterday conveyed, under a strong

guard, to Rome, where, as I have reason to believe, she will undergo trial before the holy tribunal of the Inquisition; and though it cannot be doubted, that in a court where the highest and the holiest of the earth be judges, a true and righteous judgment shall be given; yet, not the less does it behove those concerned for the safety of an accused person, to do their utmost, that all true evidence in her favour should appear. Wherefore, holy Father, I address myself to you, believing, that from your long knowledge of this excellent lady, you may be enabled to bring before her judges such proofs of her holy life and character as may avail her much; and the more easily, as from your holy calling, you will, questionless, be enabled to gain access, where others might fail to enter.

“Be earnest to save the innocent, and farewell.”

Father Laurence was at least as eager to communicate this strange and startling intelligence,

as he could have been to announce the most agreeable news. He entered the room where Juliet and her father were sitting, both in great harmony of spirits, and conversing on many pleasant plans for the future, when, without softening or preface of any kind, he bluntly exclaimed :—

“ Here is a letter, my lord Count, that brings strange news. Your sister, the most noble Abbess of Sant’ Catherina’s is arrested by the holy office on suspicion of having aided a condemned nun to escape from punishment.”

A wild and piercing shriek burst from the unhappy Juliet, she started from her seat, and throwing her arms around the neck of her father, cried aloud with passionate eagerness :—

“ You will let me go to her? My dear, dear father, you will let me go to her?”

“ Where is she?” inquired the Count with much composure.

“ In the prison of the Inquisition at Rome,” replied Father Laurence with equal magnanimity.

Juliet caught the letter from his hand, and hastily leaving the room, sought the solitude of her own chamber to read and brood over the terrible contents.

She discovered, indeed, that it contained no instructions as to where she might hope to find her, and she knew enough of the nature and government of the holy office (as who did not?) to be aware that for her to penetrate within its recesses, was impossible; but others might, though she could not; and all the energy of her mind was directed to discover to whom might be confided this dear and precious trust.

There was much in the letter which led her to believe that the writer, whose friendly motives it was impossible to doubt, conceived Father Laurence to be well fitted for this commission; but Juliet doubted his zeal in the cause of her aunt; or, indeed, in any cause that might interfere with his own safety, or even comfort; and, moreover, she was conscious that his personal knowledge of her, was of too recent a date to give any great authority to his evidence.

While pondering these thoughts, and reading again and again the letter she held in her hand, she remembered that the manciple in the convent of Santa Croce was an old retainer of the family, who was said to be so devout a man as to have outlived all earthly attachments and feelings, excepting only his devoted love and admiration of the Abbess of Sant' Catherina's, whom it was his boast to have nursed upon his knees. This old man, whose name was Francesco Garroni, had, she knew, often been invited by Father Laurence to visit him at the castle; but the Confessor always declared, that old Francesco seemed afraid to trust himself with the sight of his old haunts.

"He fears, good man," said he, "that the world should get hold of his heart anew."

Juliet had frequently seen the manciple in her visits to the church of Santa Croce; but the intercourse between them had extended no further than a friendly inquiry on her side, and an earnest blessing on his; yet it was to him her thoughts now turned, as one whose enthusiastic

love and reverence for her aunt, might profitably eke out the languid zeal of Father Laurence.

Her mind had no sooner glanced towards this infirm old man, than she determined upon seeing him. Poor Juliet had, in truth, need of finding some one who felt real affection for her aunt. Her heart turned in bitterness from the recollection of the manner in which her father had received this dreadful intelligence; and, for the first time in her life, she felt totally fearless and careless whether approval or blame might follow the step she was about to take. She thought only of Geraldine—all else on earth was indifferent to her.

The distance to Santa Croce was inconsiderable to one so used to walking as Juliet; but she had never traversed it alone, and now, unhappily, her page was gone to Torre Vecchia, on some trifling errand, that might detain him for an hour or two. Juliet could not wait his return; her mind was in a fever of restless impatience, and she instantly set off alone on this wild and almost hopeless expedition.

The flowery bank beyond the stream—the

short interval of open pasture ground on its summit—and the dark forest through which her path afterwards led, were all traversed almost unconsciously by Juliet, who was so intently occupied in meditating on her errand, that she found herself before the gates of the convent before she thought the distance half passed.

The old porter welcomed her with great respect, but very evident surprise, which was not lessened by the eager manner in which she requested immediate admission to the old man-ciple Fra' Francesco.

“ Surely, surely, Signora,” said the venerable porter, looking questions, though asking none, as he preceded her across the court to the convent parlour. He begged she would be seated there, while he commanded the attendance of the person she wished to see.

Unfortunately for Juliet, a visit from the heiress of Albano, was too important an event at Santa Croce, not to produce a violent sensation throughout the whole establishment; and the porter, instead of immediately seeking Fran-

cesco, had indulged himself in a little gossip on the way, with every brother he met, till at last the strange news reached the prior, who immediately hastened to testify his respect, by repairing to the parlour.

Juliet was already in a state of the most feverish excitement. The dreadful shock she had received, the vehement rapidity with which she had walked, and the active, but futile energy with which her mind conceived and rejected a succession of wild plans for the relief of her beloved friend, had altogether thrown her into a state of great agitation. It would be difficult to say what were the precise hopes and expectations she had formed from seeing the old maniple, but when, instead of him, the Prior Ambrose entered the room, she burst into tears.

Shocked, surprised, and embarrassed, the prior was totally at a loss how to address his unexpected visiter—he overwhelmed her with his hopes that, her noble father was well—that she was herself not ill—that nothing disagreeable had procured him this honour, till poor Juliet,

utterly overcome by vexation at her own precipitancy, as well as by all else that oppressed her, could only sob out the name of "Francesco Garroni."

To hear the name of the old manciple uttered in accents of such strong emotion, by the Lady Juliet d'Albano, so confounded the prior, that he stood before her without pronouncing a single word in reply; but the short interval which this silence allowed her for reflection, was more useful than any thing he could have said, and Juliet presently recovered herself sufficiently to say with restored composure:—

"Holy prior, my father wishes immediately to see this old servant of our family, to question him relative to a subject it is probable he may remember better than any other."

"He shall wait upon my lord the Count instantly," replied the prior with great respect, "but I could have wished my Lord had chosen another messenger—your ladyship seems over wearied by the walk."

"It was my choice to come, holy father," re-

plied the young lady; "I wish myself to converse with Francesco Garroni, and can do so freely, as we return together."

The prior waited for a moment, to see if she would afford him any further information, but as she remained silent, he left her, and in a few minutes the feeble old man, whom she had invited to be the companion of her return, appeared before her.

Juliet rose to meet him.

"Do you think, Francesco," said she, kindly extending her hand to him, "that you shall be able to walk to Albano with me?"

"To Albano?" replied the old man, shaking in every limb:—"To Albano?—and with you?—looking as you do now—pale, wan, sorrowful? No; I cannot go."

The prior had followed Garroni into the room, and when he heard him speak this bold and firm refusal to comply with the wish expressed by Lady Juliet, he exclaimed indignantly,—"*What mean you, Fra' Francesco? Is it thus the servants of the Santa Croce ought to treat her*

benefactors? Think better of it, good brother, or your age will scarce save you from the discipline; and you, too, of all men alive, to rebel against them. Who was it placed you here? Who duly pays your pension and your fees? Fie on it, fie on it, Garroni."

While the prior continued to rate him thus, the old man stood with his eyes immoveably fixed upon Juliet; but he made no movement which indicated obedience. In her eagerness to depart, she had retreated towards the door, and now remained with the lock of it in her hand, awaiting the final decision of Garroni; but still he moved not. She turned back, and laying her hand gently on his arm, said:—

"Francesco, I have much to tell you respecting my aunt. Will you not like to hear it?"

"Your aunt?—your daughter—do you mean your daughter? That saint whose prayers shall save my soul alive? yes, let me hear of her. Know you not she is the only safety left me?"

"It is your aunt, young lady," said prior Ambrose, "who pays his pension here. We

still call him manciple, but for many years he has been much too unsteady to work for his maintenance, and her bounty puts him at his ease among us—this is his meaning.”

Garroni for the first time removed his eyes from Juliet, and turned them upon his superior, but without speaking a word. There was, however, no difficulty in interpreting the look, and the movement of the head which accompanied it; they very plainly denied his interpretation. Juliet again addressed him with a question, as to whether he thought he could walk with her to Albano, adding, “I have a message to you, Garroni, from the Abbess of Sant’ Catherina’s.”

“A message from her!” exclaimed the old man, his eyes immediately losing their expression of wildness;—“A message from her? Oh, yes, I am well able to walk to Albano for that; and I would go to her, though I were sure of seeing her heretic mother sitting close beside her.”

With an alacrity and quickness of movement greatly beyond her expectations, Francesco now

strode on before her. She followed him across the court, and through the gateway by the porter's lodgings, into the forest. Here she called on him to stop, as she was desirous that their walk to the castle should give her time and opportunity for explaining to him the situation of his revered friend, and impress upon his mind the necessity of some exertion to save her. Garroni stopped at her bidding, and when she had overtaken him, she found that his countenance had completely recovered its wonted melancholy composure, which her sudden inquiry for him had so greatly disturbed.

"Francesco," she began, "the Abbess of Sant' Catherina's is in great trouble; and all her friends must join together to help her."

"Whatever her trouble may be," replied the old man, "all the elders of the church, with our most holy father the Pope at their head, will all come forward to save her from it."

"I trust they will, Francesco; I trust they will; but we are told, that those who have

known her from her youth may be, above all, necessary on the present occasion."

"Then was she surely right in sending to me, and to none other," he replied; "for who else has known her as I have done? Heaven made her an angel; but it was I,—the poor and humble Garroni,—who was chosen by the Virgin to make her a saint; I have never told her this; I have never boasted of what she owes me—but it is much."

"I know she values your faithful services highly," replied Juliet, though not well understanding the meaning of his words; "and I know you love her well; it is for this, Francesco, that I come to seek you——."

"You do not know," said the old man, slackening his pace, and laying his hand upon her arm, "how it was the holy Abbess of Sant' Catherina's was first made a nun?"

"Perhaps not, exactly," replied Juliet, rather wishing to hear what account a person who was residing in the castle at the time, might give of it:—"Do you know, Francesco?"

"It is only I, and one other, who does," he answered, almost in a whisper, "and that other—never till I have left the earth, and put off mortal flesh, am I to know whether that other be a saint or—a demon."

The last word was uttered with a shudder, which seemed to run through his whole frame, and communicated itself to Juliet, on whose arm his hand still rested.

"Isidore?" murmured Juliet almost involuntarily.

"Isidore?—What know you of Isidore?" exclaimed Francesco, grasping her arm more firmly:—"What know you of Isidore?"

"I know," replied Juliet, solemnly, "that if ever Heaven permitted a demon to walk the earth, it is in the person of Isidore we must look for him. Francesco! It is Isidore who is seeking to destroy Geraldine d'Albano."

The aged fingers relaxed their hold, and the hand of Garroni fell heavily by his side. Juliet looked in his face, and was terrified at its ghastly hue and expression.

“What ails you, good brother?” said she, trying to support him:—“Sit down here for a moment; endeavour to recover yourself. If you know aught against Isidore Bartone, it may go far towards saving my beloved aunt.”

“If I know aught against Isidore Bartone,” exclaimed Francesco, raising his eyes and feeble arms to Heaven,—“If I know aught against him? Oh, had I never known him, and his fearful doctrine, my life would have been one long day of thankful happiness; I thought that innocence of heart and life, were all that God required of those who, like me, were poor and ignorant—I should have thought so still—but Isidore came and taught me otherwise.”

Garroni had obeyed the movement of Juliet, and seated himself on the stem of a large tree which had fallen beside the path; she stood before him, listening with breathless attention to every syllable he uttered, and fearing to answer him, lest any word of hers might turn the current of his thoughts and check the communication of what was labouring in the old man’s bosom. For

a few moments he continued silent, his hands clasped over the top of the staff he carried, and his head resting against it, and when he again spoke, it was no longer in the tone of declamation, but of earnest inquiry.

“Are you sure, Juliet d’Albano, that Isidore, the Abbot of St. Andrea’s, seeks to work evil to Geraldine, Abbess of Sant’ Catherina’s?”

“Alas ! too sure, Francesco ; she lies this moment, as I have dreadful reason to believe, within the prison of the Inquisition at Rome—under an accusation laid by him—most falsely laid—as I can clearly prove, could I but find the means of facing him.”

“Then God in his mercy has let me see the light of truth before I die. Let us not linger here, let us onward to the castle, my dear child :—fear not for her—tremble not thus, and do not look so pale, for then ——” Garroni rose, as he said this, and began walking so rapidly towards the castle, that Juliet had some difficulty in keeping up with him. He no longer addressed

himself to her, but continued from time to time to mutter to himself, "I have still strength left to bear me on to Rome.—'Tis there I'll meet him—she shall not perish in his gripe—yes, they shall hear me."

In this manner he hurried on till he reached the brink of the little rivulet, and here his strength seemed to fail him, he again sat down for a few moments, but was now perfectly silent, appearing altogether exhausted.

"Shall I fetch Barnado from the garden to help you up the steep bank, good brother?" said Juliet, after she had given him a few minutes to recover himself.

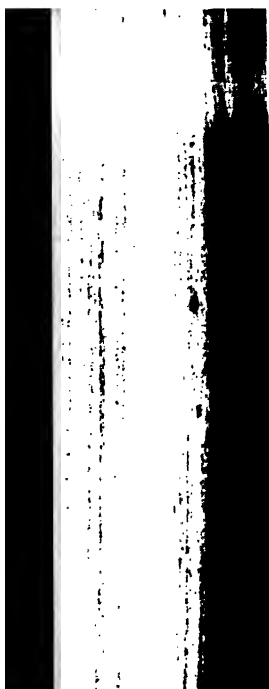
"It shall not need, my child; I feel that strength will be given me." He arose, and slowly mounted to the garden-gate. On arriving there, he stopped Juliet as she was about to open it, while he said:—

"Repeat to no one within the castle, what I have spoken of Bartone: let me be sent to Rome as a witness summoned by your aunt—


at better leisure you shall tell me more of what has been falsely brought against her—but let it be when we are alone.”

Juliet gave him her promise that she would comply with this request, and they entered the castle together.


THE END OF VOL. II.



THE ABBESS.



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THE ABBESS,

A ROMANCE.

BY THE AUTHOR

THE "DOMESTIC MANNERS OF THE AMERICANS," &c.

J'ai vu l'impie adoré sur la terre ;
Pareil au cedre il cachait dans les cieux
Son front audacieux ;
Il semblait à son gré gouverner le tonnerre,
Foulait aux pieds ses ennemis vaincus :
Je n'ai fait que passer—il n'était déjà plus.

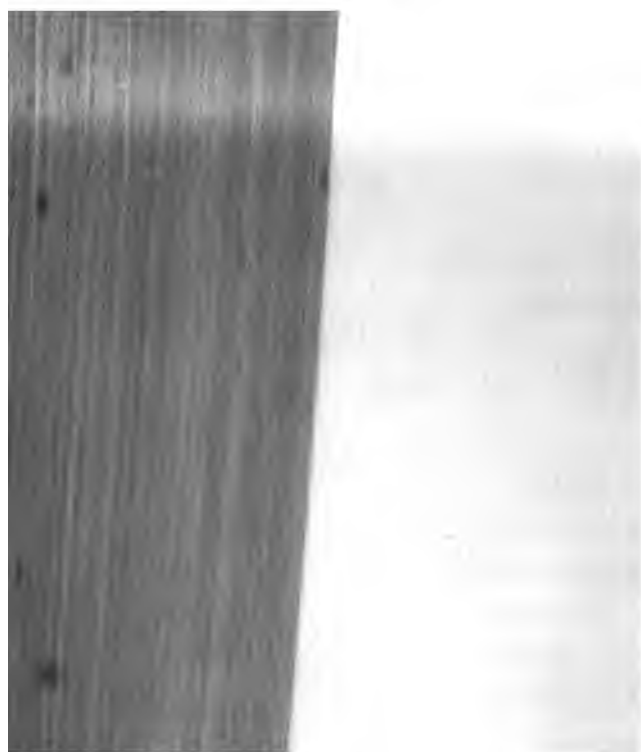
RACINE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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AVE MARIA LANE.

1833.



THE ABBESS.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Why should I write this down, that's riveted, screwed to my memory.

SHAKSPEARE.

JULIET's first care was to provide needful refreshment for her infirm companion, and equally to her surprise and satisfaction, she saw him restored, both in mind and body, to a much greater degree of strength and efficient firmness, than she had ventured to hope for. She then sought her father, and found him with Father Laurence, in a state of violent irritation at her absence, and childishly bemoaning the ill fortune which, by this "adventure of the Abbess," threatened

to delay his promised happiness with the beautiful and noble lady Claudia de Montecielo.

Such a phrase as this, three hours before, would have driven Juliet past her patience; but now she was armed with hope, so strong and so well defined to her own mind, though unintelligible, perhaps, to every other, that it was much beyond the power of any thing the Count d'Albano could say, or do, to vex or shake her.

In answer to his passionate—"Where have you been, lady Juliet? Where have you been?" three times repeated in a breath, she quietly replied,—

"To the Santa Croce, sir; no one has known my aunt so long as old Garroni—and I have brought him here, that he may accompany Father Laurence forthwith to Rome, according to the instructions conveyed to us by the dismal letter of this morning."

"You are prompt, young lady—and not too well advised to act thus, without my orders; I know not that I shall suffer my Confessor to leave me."

"You have, sir," replied his daughter, "so much at the present moment to occupy your mind, that I was unwilling to oppress you further by needless consultations."

This most judicious allusion at once tranquillized the irritation of the Count, and Juliet had no more difficulty in arranging the departure of Father Laurence for the morrow. Having satisfied her father, she returned to the room where she had left Garroni, and found him on his knees before a small cross of wood, which he had placed amongst the frame-work of the chimney.

He did not turn his head at her entrance, and she waited in perfect stillness till he had finished his devotions. He then rose from his knees with an air of almost cheerful composure, and seating himself at the table, made a sign to her to place herself near him.

"This is no moment for ceremony, my child," said he, "or Francesco Garroni would not seat himself in the presence of an Albano."

"Speak not of such idle distinctions, Garroni,"

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mended his prudence, and assured him that she felt too fully convinced both of his will and power to serve her aunt, to be over-anxious as to the means that were in his hands to accomplish it. Garroni blessed her fervently, and as he looked in her face, which no longer indicated the extreme wretchedness she had felt at Santa Croce, he said :—

“I can bear to see you now—God has received me to his mercy; you shall have masses said for me—and in Heaven I shall look upon her sweet face in glory.”

Juliet feared to let him dwell too much upon the past. It was evident that he had suffered greatly, and that there were moments when the recollection of it shook his reason; but wild as his words occasionally were, there was not one of them that did not tend to confirm her belief in the extreme importance of his testimony. It was as much to turn him from that harrowing past, as to give him needful information, that she now entered with him upon the present ground of accusation against the Abbess; she

related the escape of Camilla, and showed him that it would be easy to bring forward sufficient evidence to prove that the Abbess was in no degree concerned in it.

“It was I, Francesco,” she continued, “who plotted, arranged, and executed the whole; and, if need be, I am ready to suffer for it. Remember this, Francesco.”

He listened to her, without interrupting her by word or sign, till she had finished, and then he said—

“I see it all; lay down your innocent head this night in peace, my child; I will save her without your aid; not a second time will I see that sweet face ——.”

He stopped, and passed his hand across his eyes, as if to remove some object that distressed him.

At this moment the voice of Morgante was heard in the court, inquiring if any could tell where the lady Juliet was.

“That is my page, good brother; I must speak with him. Shall I lead you to the hall—

there is old Marietta there—you must remember her?"

Garroni made an effort to rise, but again appeared trembling and agitated; Juliet seemed to understand his feelings, for she said:—

"Stay where you are, Francesco; I will send Father Laurence to you, that you may settle together the hour and manner of your departure."

He gave her a look of thankfulness, and resumed his seat.

"Do so, do so, my child. Alas! I am very weak, when, even now that the light of Heaven so plainly shines upon my path, I still tremble, as if I yet wandered on in the dark night as heretofore."

Juliet left him; and having first performed her promise, by sending to desire Father Laurence would go to him, she went to the parlour, and ordered Olive, whom she found there, to order Morgante to attend her.

He came immediately; for having already caught some tidings of the news Father Lau-

rence had received, he had long been seeking for lady Juliet, in an agony of impatience, to hear what it really might be. Juliet had, perhaps, never felt such true affection for her little page, as she did in seeing the passionate burst of grief which followed her announcement of the Abbess's danger. Her confidence in Morgante's truth was unbounded, and she scrupled not to soothe his terror, by telling him how much she hoped from the exertions of old Francesco.

Morgante listened to her, but evidently did not share her confidence; nor could he, without knowing exactly all the vague and shadowy ideas which, in her mind, connected his testimony with events long past, but which must produce the strongest effect upon any accusation laid by Isidore against her aunt. To all this she could give him no clue. The confidence of Geraldine was too sacred to have been breathed to any.

"There is, as I believe, more news coming hither for Father Laurence," said the boy

dejectedly; "and it may be worse still, for what I know; for Father Dominic ever looks to me as a bird of bad omen."

"Father Dominic? Is he here, Morgante?"

"He is either here, or he will be soon," replied the boy. "I tarried awhile at Torre Vecchia, to see a vessel just arrived from Trieste come to the pier, and the first passenger that stepped on shore, was Father Dominic."

"That proves not that he is coming here, Morgante."

"No, Signora; but I saw him, staff in hand, following half a mile behind me, as I came up the rocky road that leads from the town to our north entrance; that road can only bring him hither, Signora."

Olive entered at the moment he said this, and confirmed his intelligence. "Grim Father Dominic" was just arrived, mightily hot and weary, and had desired to see Father Laurence alone.

"And is Father Laurence now with him, Olive?"

— Yes, Signora, they are shut up together in our father's study."

Julia, however, saw nothing alarming in this, and with a heart in which hope had now a larger portion than fear, she dismissed Morgante, with a charge to sit with Brother Francesco till Father Laurence came to him, and to be very kind and careful that he wanted for nothing.

She then joined her father in his library. It was, however, far from her intention to communicate to him any portion of her secret hope; it would have been as rash, as it certainly was unnecessary. The Count, whose mind never seemed

hours together, upon the honour and glory of her near relationship. Feeling, therefore, that her reserve would cause him no pain, Juliet said no more of old Francesco's mission, than that she was sure the venerable man would prove just such an evidence as the nameless friend, from whom the alarming letter came, had wished them to dispatch to Rome.

"It may be so, lady Juliet; and all that is very well; but as for Father Laurence, he must engage to return again with all possible speed. My marriage may be fixed for any day, a week, a fortnight; in short, I know not when, and I must have him here. Doubtless, the prior will be the fitting person to perform the ceremony; but I must have Father Laurence with me; indeed, I must."

"Fear not, dear sir, but he shall return in time; he will, I am sure, make no unnecessary delay, when such an event is expected; and here I think he comes, for I hear the shuffle of his slippers in the corridor."

The Confessor entered the moment after,

and the Count instantly began a most earnest entreaty, that let what would happen, he should take care to return in time to attend upon him on the day of his marriage. Juliet was surprised to observe the absent air with which Father Laurence listened to him; it was not only evident that he was thinking of something else, but that the subject, let it be what it might, occupied a greater portion of his whole attention, than it was usual for him to bestow on any meditation whatever. She remembered that Father Dominic had been with him, and concluded, like Morgante, that he had brought him alarming intelligence.

“If the Count does not particularly want you, Father Laurence,” said Juliet; “I wish you would have the kindness to visit old Francesco in the butler’s hall. He is anxious to learn your arrangements about setting off to-morrow. I promised to send you to him long ago; but I believe you have been engaged with your friend, Father Dominic. Has he heard the

strange news from Sant' Catherina's, Father Laurence?"

An air of the most evident embarrassment took possession of the Confessor's features.

"In truth, lady Juliet, I know not ——."

"Nay, that is strange, good Father; I should have thought it would have been the first word to pass between you."

"Far from it—far from it," said Father Laurence, recovering himself; "think you, lady Juliet, that I would speak to any man respecting what must so nearly touch my patron?—but, lady Juliet, if it please you, I have one word for your private ear, before I go to do your bidding with Francesco."

Juliet followed him out of the room, and he led the way to the parlour.

"I have been thinking, lady Juliet," said he, "that if we are fortunate enough to obtain admission to the lady Geraldine d'Albano, the Abbess of Sant' Catherina's, I should say,—I have been thinking, that it would truly be a great comfort for her, could she have some female

near her, who was not a stranger to her; therefore, I would propose, if it meets your liking, that we should take the damsel, Olive, with us to Rome."

Before Juliet replied, she gave a rapid thought as to what the monk's motive could be for this proposal—that it was tender care for the Abbess, she could hardly believe—and yet her imagination could suggest no other.

"You give me a lesson, Father Laurence," she replied: "my dear aunt will indeed want the comfort of a woman near her—but that woman can be only myself—I will, myself, accompany you to Rome."

Father Laurence coloured as red as scarlet.

"Yourself, lady Juliet? What will my lord the Count say?"

"Trouble not yourself for that, good Father;



her project of marrying him had been announced, her influence with her father was unbounded.

“Is Father Dominic still here?” said Juliet, abruptly.

“Here? Is he here, my daughter? really I do not justly know——. Have you any commands for him, lady Juliet?”

“It may be that he can serve our cause at Rome; I wish to know if he be still here, holy Father.”

“I will inquire, my daughter,” said Father Laurence, shuffling away, “and bring you notice straight.”

He left her, and Juliet remained in deep meditation; she was puzzled to discover what her reverend Confessor was about:—“but it matters not,” thought she, “I will go with him.”

Father Laurence almost immediately brought her word, that Father Dominic was returned to his convent.

“Returned?” said Juliet, carelessly; “I

thought the holy Father was just arrived from Trieste?"

Again Father Laurence coloured to the very top of his tonsure.

"Now then, good Father," said Juliet, slightly smiling, "you can pay your visit to old Garroni,—I will, meanwhile, announce to the Count my intended journey, and then, in all haste, set about preparing for it."

The Count testified little surprise at her determination, but after a moment's consideration, seemed to fancy that he understood her motives.

"You act wisely, my child—with her influence at Rome, she has little to fear—and as you have decided upon returning to your sacred calling, it is quite right that you should manifest your zeal to serve the Abbess of Sant' Catharina's; of course, you will inhabit some religious house during your stay,—know you of any with whose superior your revered aunt is well acquainted?"

"I do, sir," replied Juliet; "many of the canonesses of the Holy Sepulchre are her

friends of long standing,—it is to them I shall go.”

“That is well;—but, my dear Juliet, do not leave Rome without bringing some elegant testimony of regard for lady Claudia—some trinket—some bridal ornaments—you understand me? Something that I could offer her, with credit to my taste.”

Juliet promised to remember the commission, and to execute it punctually, if circumstances would permit her to do so. She then hastened to her room, to make such preparations as were necessary for her sudden journey, and gave Olive notice that she should require her attendance. This intimation was received with a suppressed smile, and a promise that she would be ready at an early hour on the morrow.

Juliet now prepared to go to rest, of which, in truth, she had great need; but her intention was delayed by the arrival of Morgante, who hastily begged that she would speak one word to Francesco, before she retired for the

She immediately complied with the request, and found the old man with marks of great agitation on his countenance.

"Know you," said he, the moment she entered, "who has been here?"

"Do you mean Father Dominic, good brother?"

"Yes, Father Dominic.—Do you take him into your councils?"

"No, indeed, Francesco—I hardly know him by sight."

"Then wherefore is he here?"

"He is well-known to our Confessor, and often visits him."

"I knew not that," replied Garroni, thoughtfully. "Is he to go with us?"

"Certainly not, he can know nothing of this business; Father Laurence assures me, that he has not named it to him; but I shall go with you, Francesco."

"It is right—it is very right you should, my child,—and take the boy, your page, with you—he may do us service;—but hold no close council

with the friend of Dominic—I will not trust him."

These last words were spoken in a cautious whisper. Juliet made a sign that she understood him, and rose to take her leave; Garroni rose too, and followed her to the door; at the moment she was leaving him, he laid his hand upon her arm, and whispered in her ear—

"For the love of mercy, let me not pass this night alone!"

He seemed to speak with difficulty and reluctance, and his hand trembled: Juliet trembled too:—

"You shall not," she replied; "compose yourself, Garroni; Morgante shall be with you."

At an early hour the following morning, lady Juliet, her page, and Olive, were in their litter; and before the sun was fully above the horizon, they had already travelled a league on their journey towards Rome; Father Laurence and Garroni rode on mules beside them, accompanied by several well-armed attendants.

It is probable that some scruple of conscience suggested to the Count, that he was himself taking this important business rather supinely, for he insisted, that lady Juliet and his Confessor should come to his bed-side, before they left the castle, and receive a message for his respected sister.

"Tell her," said he, with most impressive earnestness, "that nothing should have kept me from waiting upon her at such a time, but the imperative duty of attending to the negociation, on which depends the continuance of the race from which she sprang,—in a word, explain to her fully my present delicate situation, with respect to the lady Claudia di Montecielo."

Both Juliet and the Confessor promised that his commands should be punctually obeyed; he then, with most amiable fatherly anxiety, desired she would take great care of herself, and not fail to announce to the Cardinal, who had the honour of being her cousin, that she was in Rome.

"But above all, Juliet," he repeated, in conclusion, "remember lady Claudia."

Juliet reiterated the promise she had before given, and he then permitted them to depart.

Though the journey was long and tedious, it was performed without accident; and lady Juliet and her cortege found themselves in safety at Rome, within a week of their leaving Albano.

CHAPTER XXXV.

No metal can, no, not the hangman's axe,
Bear half the keenness of thy sharp envy.

SHAKESPEARE.

JULIET repaired immediately to the convent of the Holy Sepulchre, where she was cordially and respectfully received by the noble Countess di Melino, chief canoness of the order. Nothing could exceed the astonishment, with which she herself, and the other ladies of her house, heard that the Abbess of Sant' Catherina's had been arraigned before the holy tribunal. When it was discovered, that lady Juliet herself had been resident at Ancona, during the time that the escape of the immured nun was effected, the

eager curiosity of the canonesses knew no bounds; and it required all the influence of the powerful motives which sustained her discretion, to enable her to answer the interminable string of questions addressed to her, without committing herself. The very short time she had resided in the convent, furnished her strongest defence, through the whole of this embarrassing examination.

“ Were the sisterhood generally attached to the unfortunate nun ? ” was the natural question.

“ I really had no means of judging—I took the novice’s habit the very day her situation was discovered,” was the unsatisfactory reply.

“ Do you know in what part of the building the vaults were situated, where the interment took place ? ”

“ I was told that they were in the side next the sea.”

“ Is it not possible, then,” said a portly canoness, who still felt some sympathy with human affairs; “ is it not possible that her lover

may have found means to exhume her from without, and so bear her away by water?"

"It seems very probable," replied Juliet.

"No, no, no—quite impossible," said the Countess di Melino.—"I have visited the Abbess of Sant' Catherina's in her convent, and such a device as you speak of would, ere this, have sent the chapel afloat upon the Adriatic.—Pray, my dear young lady, was the Abbess herself particularly attached to the unfortunate culprit?"

"My aunt, I think, knew very little of her."

It was thus that Juliet's first weary day at Rome passed away.—Father Laurence had promised, when they parted the evening before at the gate of the Holy Sepulchre, to use his utmost endeavours to discover where the Abbess was lodged. He boasted of friends attached to the holy office, and declared himself very confident of being able to ascertain both where she was, and when her trial would come on; but the day passed, and he did not appear; neither had she seen Garroni. The old man had confessed to her,

that the line of conduct he meant to pursue was not without difficulty. He spoke with the most sincere and profound respect of the jurisdiction of the Inquisition; but owned that its very sanctity sometimes made it difficult for a poor man, unconnected with any of the powerful churchmen who belonged to it, to procure attention. Still he was sanguine in hope, and had left her with the assurance of early tidings,—but none came. Morgante, whom the good canoness permitted to be lodged within their convent, tortured his wit to find sources of consolation and hope for his mistress, but all he could do was in vain. Juliet was most completely wretched.

It was matter of more surprise than comfort to her, that Olive gave every indication of being quite as unhappy as herself. She passed the day in tears, and when she attended Juliet on her retiring for the night, declared herself so ill, that she did not expect to be able to leave her bed next day.

Early on the following morning Juliet was

summoned to the parlour of the convent by a stranger, who desired to speak to her—it was Garroci. He appeared to be infinitely more active and alert than she ever remembered to have seen him, and was evidently animated by some feeling that appeared to give him new life. He addressed her abruptly on the business which brought him, hardly allowing himself time to answer her inquiry for his health. “You must let me have the service of your little page, my child; you must let me take him with me instantly.”

“Morgante!—What can he do for you, Francesco?”

“Every thing. Our holy father, the Pope, like his most blessed prototype, the lowly Jesus, says, ‘Let the little children come unto me!’—These words, embroidered in crimson, and sparkling in gems, are suspended over the head of our Sovereign Pontiff, when he passes through the gallery leading from St. Peter’s to the Vatican; ere he enters his palace, he turns, and it is then that from the hands of little children he receives

he petitions of his people—I must convey one to him, lady Juliet; and it must be Morgante who shall deliver it.”

The boy was called, and readily agreed to accompany the old man, who promised that he should return in a few hours. He did so, and assured Juliet, with great satisfaction, that he was very sure the fingers of his Holiness closed firmly over the paper he had given him, as his own little thumb had been fortunate enough to share the pressure.

That day was Thursday; and it was at the congregation which was held that night, that his Holiness at length yielded to the reasonings of the Abbot Isidore, and consented that the Abbess of Sant’ Catherina’s should be summoned to take her trial before the holy tribunal of the Inquisition, both for the imputed crime of releasing a condemned nun, and for other scandalous practices brought against her in accusation, from another quarter.

Friday was the day of the week, which at that time was set apart by the holy office, for the

commencement of all such new trials as were of especial interest; and Isidore, confident in the final result of his endeavours, was perfectly prepared for immediately bringing forward that of Geraldine d'Albano.

It has been said, that at this time the office of Grand Inquisitor was no longer vested in one person, but that its powers were delegated to the whole college of Cardinals, whose decisions were subject to the final and absolute judgment of the Pope. It had, therefore, been the anxious care of Isidore to influence as many of this body as possible, against the Abbess of Sant' Caterina's, by conveying to them, as if from various quarters, statements of heretical doctrines which she was said to have encouraged.

How far he had succeeded, he had no power of knowing. The cautious secrecy of Inquisitors was hardly greater in their commerce with the world, than with each other; and when the dark conclave met for their fearful business, within the secret chambers of the holy office, the trembling prisoner, who had been blindly led

through its recesses, and only restored to the use of his eyes when placed in the midst of his sable judges, was hardly more ignorant who the individuals might be, who at that moment constituted the court, than each member was of all the rest. When the business of the hour began, indeed, the voices of such as spoke announced them to their fellows; but even this was often avoided by the cautious whisper, which doomed a wretch to torture or to death, from beneath the shelter of an Inquisitor's cowl.

It was almost with a feeling of gladness that Geraldine d'Albano saw, on the fourteenth day of her sad and solitary confinement, her door open, and two men enter, clothed in long loose garments of sable serge, and wearing black velvet masks upon their faces. They approached her chair, and each taking her gently by the arm, caused her to rise, leading her across the room, and down the marble stairs into a hall, where a small covered litter, surrounded by men dressed like themselves, stood ready to receive her. In this litter she was immediately placed,

its leather curtains being carefully secured round her, and then raised by the men who stood beside it. She was carried in this manner for about half an hour, when the bearers stopped; and Geraldine heard the opening of heavy gates. The next moment she was again borne forward, and was presently conscious of being conveyed down a long flight of stairs; at the bottom of these another short pause preceded the opening of a door; after which, not even the closely-fastened curtains that surrounded her, could prevent her being conscious of the damp freshness of the air she was breathing.

The men now moved rapidly along, as if anxious to bring their labour to a close; three times they stopped, while doors were opened to admit them, after which the litter was placed upon the ground, the leather curtains were drawn aside, and a hand extended to assist her leaving it. As soon as she had done so, she endeavoured to discover what species of abode was now prepared for her; but the light was not enough to permit her seeing the form or extent

of the chamber; the litter she had left was immediately raised from the ground, and carried out; she heard the door close; silence the most profound followed, and a few minutes of misty examination sufficed to convince her that she was once more alone.

There was much in the obscurity, the chillness, and low-arched gloom of the apartment, to appal a timid spirit; and the Abbess sighed, as she deliberately surveyed its quaint and ingenious architecture, to think how many wretched beings had, probably, shrunk in trembling terror from the empty darkness of its remote recesses. But it was not by such devices that Geraldine could be made to suffer, and her survey completed, she sat down on a stone bench against the wall, removing, almost without a shudder, the chain which hung from a staple inserted in it. One stage of suffering was past, and she rejoiced at it. Her spirits relieved from the dreadful monotony of her late confinement, in a great degree recovered their accustomed energy. She knew to a certainty, that she was in the

hands of an inveterate enemy; she knew also that his power was considerable, but she was not ignorant of her own. She had raised the reputation of a rich endowment from the contempt and scorn which had fallen upon it, to a state that might have satisfied the utmost ambition of its pious founder; she knew that she had deserved and obtained the esteem of those, whose righteous wishes she had for years righteously fulfilled, and this conviction, backed by her firm but humble reliance on the Power who ever sustains the pure in heart, enabled her to await with passive fortitude whatever might ensue. Several hours passed, after her removal, before her new prison was visited. At length a door on the opposite side from that by which she had entered, was opened, and a figure precisely similar to those she had already seen, entered, and set a bowl of soup, some bread, and a pitcher of water beside her, on the bench where she sat, and again left the room; she took the refreshment, and it appeared that she had been watched from without, as she did so, for as soon

as she had finished her meal, the door again opened; and now two men entered, one of whom immediately tied a handkerchief over her eyes, and then each taking gently hold of her arms as before, led her between them for a considerable distance. When they stopped, the bandage was removed from her eyes, and she found herself in a large hall, hung entirely with black, which, notwithstanding the lamps which were suspended from the arched ceiling, produced exactly the sombre effect so aptly described by a modern bard—

Not darkness—but light that was dead.

It was some time before she could distinguish the audience before whom she stood; but when her eyes had become accustomed to the faint lights, and ill-defined shadows which marked their outlines, she perceived that immediately before her were many rows of black figures, all habited exactly alike, with their heads deeply enveloped in cowls. They were ranged in a semicircle, one row being on the level of the floor, and the others raised by equal intervals

above it. Between these, her judges, and herself, was a long table, also covered with black, at which were placed four sable figures with the implements for writing before them.

A profound silence of several minutes followed her entrance, and then she heard a voice proclaim her name and titles from so dark and distant a part of the chamber, that she could not justly ascertain whence it proceeded. She did not answer, and the words were repeated, but evidently from another part of the room. Geraldine almost smiled at the idle mummery, and replied distinctly—

“I am here.”

“Geraldine d’Albano,” said a low and tremulous voice from among the figures who sat before her,—“Geraldine d’Albano, you are here to answer to a charge of most foul heresy,”—the speaker paused, and Geraldine answered firmly—

“Who is my accuser?”

“Write!” said another voice from the bench.

“Geraldine d’Albano,” repeated the same feeble voice, “you are not here to question, but

to answer.—Do you hold sacred, entire, and with no shade of most accursed innovation, the true catholic and apostolic doctrine of the only holy church as received at Rome?”

“I do hold sacred, entire, and with no shade of most accursed innovation, the true catholic and apostolic doctrine of the only church in which it has been my blessed fortune to be bred.”

“Write!” said a voice which even in that single word, and from the depth of the smothering cowl, sounded friendly and approving.

“Yea, write!” said another voice trembling with agitation; “but write carefully—by Heaven she palter with us.”

Geraldine in an instant knew that this was the voice of Isidore.

The vehemence of the exclamation appeared to excite a general murmur. Several minutes elapsed before silence was perfectly restored.

Another voice then spoke.

“Geraldine d’Albano, do you know the interior of the vaults used for the confinement or interment of criminals in the convent dedicated

to Sant' Catherina's of Siena, situated near Ancona?"

"Perfectly," replied the prisoner.

"Write," proceeded from several voices at once.

"You know the interior of these vaults perfectly. How came you to be thus acquainted with them? Recollect yourself."

"When I was made Abbess of the convent of Sant' Catherina's, the master key of every part of the building was delivered to me by the usual authorities; and on that same day I made a progress through the whole edifice, neither the vaults for the burial of the dead, nor those for the punishment of the living, were omitted."

"Have you never visited them since that day?" said an Inquisitor—and again Geraldine recognised the voice of Isidore.

"I know not, most venerable judges," she said, "how great licence of reply is allowed a prisoner before your august tribunal; but if permitted, I would answer the person who last questioned me, by coming at once to the point at which I know he aims."

A profound silence followed these words, which Geraldine construed as permission to proceed, and she was about to do so, when a cowled head leaned forward from the lower range of seats, and bending towards one of the secretaries, uttered eagerly the word, "write!" She at once felt her danger, and determined to say nothing that was not rendered necessary by a direct question.

It appeared, however, that they expected her to proceed, for several minutes elapsed before another word was spoken. The voice of Isidore then repeated the former question:—

"Geraldine d'Albano, have you ever visited these dungeons, since the day that you saw them in your progress round the building, on occasion of your installation?"

"I have."

"At what time? and for what purpose?"

"The time was about two months ago—the purpose was to examine the dungeon, previous to the immurement of a nun within them, for breach of vows."

"Write !" again sounded from several voices.

"For what reason did you make this examination ?" said a hoarse voice which was not that of Isidore.

"For the purpose of ascertaining the truth of a tradition, extant in my convent, concerning the execution of a similar offender. It was only by tradition, that I knew how such deeds were treated at Sant' Catherina's—none such have chanced, since I held rule there."

"She speaks the truth," was uttered in a tone of authority from the higher seat.

"But wherefore did you deem this examination necessary, Geraldine d'Albano ?"

"It was rather a feeling of interest, than of necessity, which occasioned it."

"And what was the result ?"

"I was unable to judge what the mode of punishment was to be."

"But you ascertained this afterwards, Geraldine d'Albano ?" said the voice of Bartone.

"Never," she replied firmly.

"Were you not present at the execution of the sentence?" was pronounced from the higher seats.

"I was not."

"Was it not the duty of the Abbess of Sant' Catherina's to witness the fulfilment of the sentence?" said the same voice.

"It was, but nature sank under the horror of it. When the judges went to witness the ceremony of degradation, and all that was to follow, my senses failed me, and I was left as one dead, on the floor of my convent parlour."

"Then you knew that death, a painful and lingering death, must inevitably ensue?" these words were spoken by the same friendly voice which had before cheered her.

"I did," was the reply.

Again a whispered murmur passed along the misty lines of judges and of counsellors, and the uncertain outlines of the large and shapeless cowls varied, as the heads they concealed communicated with those around.

"Members of your own sisterhood attended

on you, through this swooning?" said an Inquisitor.

"I think so—but the friendly voice that first met my returning sense, was that of a noble lady, who, if she might be questioned here, would not shrink from confirming my words."

"Your noble niece, perhaps," said Isidore.

"I speak of the holy mother, Santa Christina, Abbess of St. Ildefonse," replied Geraldine.

"How may this be?" said an Inquisitor. "It is on record, that this holy Abbess was herself of the court who sat in judgment on the apostate nun; she too must have witnessed its execution."

"I trust," said Geraldine—and for the first time she spoke with some degree of trepidation—"I trust I have done my noble friend no wrong by naming her; but sure I am, it was she who stood beside me, when I opened my eyes from the darkness which fell upon them, when the bell called us to the fearful ceremony."

"Geraldine d'Albano, this could hardly be—your senses were still wandering, and what you

wished to see, you might easily fancy was before you."

A moment passed before Geraldine would trust her voice—and then she said—

"If the pledged word of Geraldine d'Albano be doubted in a court, formed from the church of Rome, it is time she ceased to speak; she thought she had been better known here."

"Change of circumstance will often lead to change of nature," said the same hoarse voice, that had before spoken. "The honoured Abbess of Sant' Catherina's, and the accomplice of an apostate nun, can hardly be listened to with the same confidence."

"Enough of this," said an Inquisitor from the upper seats, standing up as he spoke—and then added :—

"If it be required by the court, the Abbess of St. Ildefonse is ready to appear before it; she is in Rome."

"Enough," repeated another voice, and in an instant, a whisper that was spreading through the court, was hushed to perfect silence.

"After recovering from your deadly swoon, you were doubtless left to quiet and repose," said the hoarse Inquisitor.

"The Abbess of St. Ildefonse passed the night in my chamber,"—replied the prisoner.

"How?—The Abbess of St. Ildefonse remained absent from her convent during the night?—this must have caused most strange dismay throughout her community. Recollect yourself."

"The Abbess of St. Ildefonse is in Rome," repeated the voice which had before proclaimed this fact.

"Enough!" was again uttered in the same tone of authority that had twice silenced all.

"Lead back the prisoner," said the Fiscal Proctor, who stood at the top of the table, ready to receive the whispered orders of those behind him; and, in a moment, the eyes of Geraldine were again covered, and she was led forward by two men, each holding her by an arm. When the bandage was removed, she found herself in the same dark chamber, where

she had been placed before her examination; and was now more sensible than before of the cold desolation of its appearance. But she was not disposed to repine. She felt conscious that great as was the peril in which she stood, she was not without powerful friends to support her, and she seated herself again on the rugged bench, stedfast both in hope and endurance.

Ere her memory had half recapitulated the scene which had passed, the door by which she had originally entered was again opened, and two of the same dark figures approached her once more. Her eyes were silently blinded, and again she was led out of the room. After walking some distance, one of her conductors pronounced the word "stairs," and she was led up a long flight of steps, so narrow as to oblige one of those who led her, to quit his hold. Having reached the top, he again took his station by her side, and so proceeded till another door was opened to receive them, when the bandage being removed from her eyes, she had the satis-

faction of perceiving that she was in a small room, hung with rude tapestry, and lighted by a grated window, too near the ceiling, indeed, to prevent her looking from it; but affording her both the light and air of Heaven; a chair and a table occupied the middle of the room, and in one corner of it was a low pallet bed.

Her conductors instantly left her; but not even the harsh sound of the key that secured her door, so grating, under all circumstances, to the ear of a prisoner, could chill the glow of hope, which this change of accommodation produced. It was not the increased comfort that cheered her, though that was something; but it was the undoubted evidence which this afforded, that she was no longer in the hands of Isidore, which calmed her spirits, and rendered her almost fearless for the result. It was now that she felt the full advantage of Juliet's wise and tender care for her. Not only was it impossible to prove that she had assisted in the escape of Camilla; but the more all those who had sur-

rounded her were questioned concerning the time it took place, the more clearly must it be shown, that she could have had no share in it.

Her supper was brought, and set with decent observance before her ; and when the light failed, one of her masked attendants placed a lamp upon her table. Thankful, serene, and almost happy in her solitary prison, Geraldine retired early to rest, and fell asleep, while the image of Juliet, radiant from the happiness of a reunion with her, still floated before her fancy.

Far different was the watchful night of Bartone. It was passed in communion with the monk, Dominic, who bade him rest securely on the overwhelming testimony which he should bring against his enemy on the morrow, at the very moment that her besotted judges, and her own pampered spirit, should deem her trial past.

“ We may fail to prove her connivance in the escape of the nun,” said di Pino ; “ they may even bring evidence to prove that it was impossible. What then ? Can this obliterate the

burning shame these eyes have witnessed? Think it not, Bartone. Thou shalt see her yet, hiding her dishonoured face with her hands, and cursing even the dim light of her dark trial chamber."

Never did music sound more sweetly to the ear, than did the hoarse accents of Dominic to the soul of Isidore; he heaped golden promises upon his head; he boasted largely of his power and secret influence; he numbered the vows of those who had promised to support him; yet still he was not satisfied. Again and again he made his confederate repeat the hateful charges, that he knew must blast her pure name for ever; and then, through the long hours of night, he listened unwearied to the proofs he showed, that none could witness for her in this matter, but that all must conspire to prove her guilty. It was settled between them, that the whole weight of the examination which was to overwhelm her on the morrow, should proceed from Di Pino, Isidore only aiding him, from time to time, by such questions, as his intimate knowledge of her

character might suggest, as most likely to shake her fortitude. The dome of St. Peter's was already bright in the morning sun, when Isidore and di Pino retired to rest, yet both were present at the early mass performed within its gorgeous walls; and both were waiting, with all the energy of well-recruited strength, for the hour at which they were to steal from the light of day into the dark judgment-hall of the Inquisition.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

L'homme superbe est renversé,
Ses propres flèches l'ont percé.

RACINE.

JULIET passed this interval in a state of the most miserable disappointment and uncertainty. Father Laurence did not come near her, and she saw no more of Garroni; even Morgante's gay spirit was utterly quenched, and Olive tormented her by unaccountable moans, wailings, and lamentations concerning the state of her soul, which she declared to be given over finally and for ever to perdition. The bodily sickness, of which she had complained, was healed, she said—but she

was now suffering from what was infinitely worse, namely, the goads and stings of an offended conscience. All this was repeated many times, before Juliet could withdraw her attention from her own engrossing anxieties, sufficiently to listen to her ; but at length, some strong expression of self-reproach induced her to inquire what it was to which she alluded, and what crime she could have committed, which called for a repentance so vehement.

“ Oh, Signora !” said the girl with the tone of a person much comforted, “ you will ask me at last then ? I thought I should burst and die—and nobody know wherefore—oh, Signora !”

“ But what is it, Olive ? It is no good for me to ask, you know, if you only answer by exclamations.—What is the matter, Olive ?”

“ I am the greatest sinner alive, Signora—that’s the matter,—always save and except Father Laurence, though—he is ten thousand times worse than I am—he promised not to leave me, for one single moment, all the whole time I was at Rome, and to show me St. Peter’s, and the

Pope, and all the cardinals; instead of which you see how he treats me, Signora."

Juliet thought that she had much greater reason to complain of the Confessor's desertion, than her waiting-woman. But she agreed, that it was extremely wrong in him to keep himself thus out of the way, when he must well know he would be so greatly wanted.

"Wanted, Signora!—Holy mother, you have no great need to want him—it would be well for you and your's, if you had never found him—the traitor! To wheedle me from my true allegiance, and leave me to break my heart by myself." The girl sobbed aloud, but evidently as much from passion as from sorrow.

"If you wish me to give you any comfort, Olive," said her mistress, "you must let me understand the cause of your distress. What is it that Father Laurence has done, to deserve these bitter reproaches? I think he certainly ought not to have been so long without returning to me; yet it is possible, that his earnest desire to serve my aunt may be the reason of it."

“He desire to serve her! The traitor! He has come here himself, and brought me too, for no other reason under heaven, but to blacken and defame her!”

“Holy Virgin! What is it you mean, Olive?”

“I mean, Signora, what is worse than I have any power to say. I believe the devil has been tampering with Father Laurence, in the form of that dark monk, Dominic; and then he tampered with me—poor innocent girl that I am!”

“But what evil can he wish my aunt? For God’s sake, speak intelligibly.”

“Signora, I am ashamed to do it.—Your aunt took little notice of him—and none of me—that is all the real harm I know against her.—True it is, I saw her walk off into our woods at Albano, looking more like an angel than a nun—and Father Laurence says she went to meet her lover there—and it is to say that same word before the cardinals, who are to be all dressed up in black, that he has brought me here—but, oh, what joy and pleasure did he promise me! and does he think, the traitor! that I am to be shut

up here, with a score of proud old women, while he swaggers through the gay streets, looking with a merry eye at every bold hussy he happens to meet by the way—and then, perhaps, he will come to me to-morrow morning, as smooth as velvet, and say, ‘Olive, my good girl, come with me;’ but he does not know Olive Normo yet.”

Inexpressibly astonished, Juliet listened to this tirade without uttering a word in reply. She liked neither her Confessor nor her maid over well; but that they should have entered into so infamous a plot to destroy her aunt, appeared perfectly inconceivable; and she hesitated to believe her, even though she accused herself.

“You look as if you did not hear a word that I said, Signora;” cried the girl, piqued at the little impression her information seemed to have produced; “and yet, methinks, it were as well you listened to me.”

“I do listen to you, Olive,” replied Juliet, with much emotion; “but your statement is so

very extraordinary, that I know not how to believe it."

"It is true, as that Christ is in heaven," replied the girl. "Perhaps you may believe me, Signora, when he comes at last, and makes some excuse to take me out with him."

"You say right, Olive," answered Juliet, with sudden earnestness. "If this happens, atone at once for all the evil you have done and thought against us, by letting me go in your place. When I have put on your clothes, and wrapped your large black veil around me, there can be no danger of his discovering me. He means to lead you to the prison of the Inquisition, my poor girl; you might, perchance, die with terror there,—but I shall not fear it.—My cousin, the Cardinal, will be there, and he will shield me."

"The traitor!" again ejaculated Olive; "do you really think, Signora, that he meant to lead me to those horrid dungeons, that I know it is dangerous even to name, instead of taking me

to see all the beautiful priests dressed out at St. Peter's?"

"I have no doubt of it, Olive. He has misled you sadly, my poor girl; but behave as I would have you now, and I will not only forgive, but most richly reward you;" and, as an earnest of this, Juliet gave her two or three pieces of gold coin.

"What a fool I have been!" exclaimed Olive; "for, after all is said and owned, Father Laurence never gave me above the value of two gold pieces in his life; and now I shall be rewarded as I ought, and have a safe conscience into the bargain."

This day also, which was that of the Abbess's first examination, wore away without bringing either Father Laurence or Garroni to the convent; but, at an early hour the following morning, the strange history of Olive was confirmed by the arrival of the Confessor, who replied to all the inquiries of Juliet, by assuring her, that he and his friends would leave nothing undone

that could assist her noble aunt. Having suffered the conversation to last as long as he thought decency required, he took his leave, saying, as he left the parlour, that he would speak a word to the poor girl Olive, before he went, as he had promised to take care of her in the new and strange scene, into which their present melancholy circumstances had brought them. Juliet made no objection to this, but said that it would perhaps be more convenient for Olive to wait upon him in the parlour.—He thanked her humbly for her condescending kindness, and re-entered the room, while Juliet retired from the parlour to send Olive to him. She found her prepared for the summons; for some sisters of the house, who had heard her incessant lamentations on his not appearing, had good-humouredly hastened to inform her, that he was arrived at last.

“Will you be true to me now, Olive?” said Juliet in strong agitation. “Will you feign to receive him kindly; and if, indeed, he propose

that you should follow him, will you consent to do so, and hasten hither, that I may take your place?"

"I will, lady Juliet," said Olive, preparing to leave the room, "and to your generosity I will trust, to reward me for losing his good-will thereby—the traitor!"

A very few minutes brought her back again, triumphant at the proof she could now offer of her sincerity.

"He hardly thought it worth his while to ask my pardon," she said, as she began to dress her mistress. "'Make haste, Olive, I have no time to spare,' was the most of his greeting; but I will watch him, the traitor!"

Juliet so nearly resembled her maid in stature, that when she had put on her dress, and enveloped her head in the thick veil, without which no woman, who affected to be above the very lowest class, could appear in the streets, it was quite impossible for any eye to discover the imposition. She immediately hastened to the outer

door of the convent, where, as Olive informed her, she would find the Confessor loitering.

“ You must follow him, Signora,” said the well-taught soubretta, “ not walk beside him, and by no means speak to him.”

Juliet obeyed these instructions, and soon found herself rapidly following the active steps of Father Laurence through the streets of Rome. The whole scene was so new and so strange to her, that she feared to lose sight of him for an instant, lest she should get irretrievably bewildered in the crowded streets, and kept her eyes immoveably fixed upon the waving outline of his ample robe, as he swam forward before her.— After a walk which had lasted long enough to weary her, Father Laurence suddenly turned aside from the open street, and led the way through a dirty and obscure passage, which ran between two buildings of great loftiness. When he had threaded this half way, he stopped; and carefully looking before and behind him to ascertain that they were alone, he said:

“Now, Olive, dear, we are now near the place, where I shall want you to speak boldly, what I have told you to say. Fear nothing. However dark and dismal the room may be, remember that I shall be close to you, even though you may not see me. Act well in this, my dear girl, and you shall never know sorrow more. Remember all I told you.”

Juliet bowed her head in silence, and the monk was satisfied. Having advanced a few steps farther, he stopped before a low and narrow door, in one of the lofty walls which skirted the passage, and knocking gently, was instantly admitted, followed by Juliet, who, in spite of all the resolution she could call to her aid, trembled in every limb.

The door through which they entered, had appeared to open before them without the assistance of hands, for no person was visible. Father Laurence advanced a few paces into the dark stone passage which received them; and touching another door in the side wall, it yielded before him, and Juliet, who followed

close, found herself in a small square room, without any visible window, being lighted solely by a lamp suspended from the ceiling. The effect of entering from the clear and living light of noon-day, into the trembling and uncertain glimmer of lamp-light, is always sombre and unpleasant; and Juliet's spirits were in a state to make every external circumstance keenly felt. She shuddered, and perhaps the more painfully, from the vague and unsubstantial nature of her fears; she felt assured, that they were already within the walls of the Inquisition, and this was quite enough to make the heart of an Italian girl sink within her, even had she not believed that the being she loved with all a daughter's fondness, was immured within its fearful dungeons. The Confessor pointed to a seat, and speaking in the cautious whisper, which seemed natural to the place, said, "You will be quite safe here, dear Olive, till I return. No one shall enter to disturb you. Fear nothing."

He then raised the arras, with which the walls

were covered, and retreated by a small door under it.

In substituting herself for Olive, Juliet had acted upon the natural impulse of wishing to place a friend, instead of an enemy, to answer any question that might be asked respecting her aunt. This idea had no sooner suggested itself, than she acted upon it; and the exertion necessary to ensure the success of her project, had been sufficient to engross all her faculties, leaving no interval for meditation on the possible consequences to herself. It was during the hour which followed Father Laurence's retreat, that the fact of her own share in the escape of Camilla first recurred to her memory. Her aunt had, in truth, taken no active part whatever in the transaction, and Juliet knew that there were so many witnesses competent to prove this, that she had hardly, for a moment, suffered herself to doubt the final result of the trial; but now, by her own voluntary act, she had placed the real culprit in the hands of those who were bound by every thing they held most sacred,

to punish the act she had done; and that, with all the severity with which unbounded power can visit crime.

This conviction rushed upon her mind with such fulness, and force of truth, that, for a time, she felt perfectly overwhelmed by it. Her heart seemed cold within her bosom, and had she been required at that moment to speak, her parched tongue and trembling lips would have given evidence of the extremity of terror, which had seized upon her. But it was not long that this enslaving weakness could keep possession of the generous and devoted heart of Juliet. She again forgot herself, and the possible peril which might await her, in the exhilarating hope of serving Geraldine; and though she doubted not, that she still possessed the power of retreat, yet felt no wish to avail herself of it.

She remembered the ease with which the doors, through which they had passed, yielded to a touch, and thought that if she were indeed within the walls of the Inquisition, she had not yet reached that portion of it, from whence

those who enter, cannot retreat. She had come voluntarily; and the feeling that now caused her to approach the door by which she entered, hardly amounted to a doubt, that she could retreat in the same manner if she wished it; but she found it locked.

She then raised the arras, and examined the doorway by which the Confessor had retreated; this too resisted her attempt to open it; and she became aware that she was already a prisoner; but, at the same moment, the conviction that Father Laurence could have no possible wish to entrap Olive into the power of the Inquisition, prevented the discovery from affecting her, as it would have done, had she believed herself known to those who had made her so.

For nearly two hours she was left alone to meditate on her strange situation, when the door beneath the arras was opened, and Father Laurence re-appeared, followed by two familiars.

"I am sorry to have been so long absent, my daughter," said he, as he entered; "but I could not avoid it. I trust that you have suf-

fered no idle fears to get hold of you, my good girl? There is no occasion, my daughter; you are come in a good cause, and all such are protected here."

He then took from the arm of one of the officials, a long black robe and hood, in which he told his companions that she must envelope herself.

"The noble judges of this sacred court," said Father Laurence, with a reverential whine, intended to win the approbation of the officials, "are especially careful that all such as bear witness against the accused heretics, whom it is their holy duty to punish, shall be hid from the eyes of all men, that so their virtuous testimony may never bring them into trouble."

Juliet wrapped the heavy garment around her, and gladly enveloped her head in the impenetrable shelter of its large hood.

"It is not needful that you should see your way, my daughter," continued the Confessor; "these gentlemen will guide you safely."

One of the men unceremoniously pulled the

hood over her face, and each taking hold of an arm, turned her round, and then led her forward, but in such a manner as to render her quite uncertain by which door they made their exit.

“Stairs to descend,” was uttered close to her ear soon after she began to move; but her effort to obey the intimation was hardly necessary, for she was more carried than led down them.

Her conductors stopped at intervals, as if arrested by a door, but no sound, either of their opening or closing it, met her ear. At length it appeared that she had reached her destination; the familiars quitted their hold, and she heard low voices, as if at the distant part of a large chamber. Juliet raised her hand, and removed the hood and veil sufficiently to enable her to perceive the objects before her; but they were so dim and indistinct, that it was long ere she was at all sure what it was she saw. The hall she stood in was the same as that in which the Abbess had been examined; but

Juliet was stationed in an obscure and distant part of it.

As by degrees she recovered her composure, she was able, through the awful stillness of the chamber, to distinguish what passed at that end of it which was occupied by the tribunal. The circular seats were not as yet all filled; but at intervals, a dusky figure, with noiseless step, entered, she knew not how, and glided among those who had already taken their places on them. The four secretaries were stationed at the table, and the Fiscal Proctor was conversing in a whisper with some of the members of the court, who had not yet taken their seats.

At length the semi-circle of dark cowl was completed, and her heart bounded with violent emotion, as the Fiscal Proctor pronounced:—

“Lead in the prisoner.”

Immediately, without the slightest sound being perceptible, three dark figures were visible at the bottom of the table in front of the tribunal. They were all so completely concealed by the

long loose dresses they wore, that Juliet felt no assurance that she beheld her aunt, till she heard her name proclaimed in the same manner as on the former day.

Geraldine did not now wait for a repetition of the summons, but immediately answered, "I am here."

It would be difficult to describe the emotion, with which Juliet listened to her voice. The fear and sorrow which her perilous situation inspired, could not conquer the pleasure of knowing that she was again near her, and the tears that started to her eyes were those of joy.

The first voice that spoke, issued from the lower bench, and though Juliet had so seldom heard it, she instantly knew that it was the Abbot of St. Andrea's who addressed the prisoner.

"Geraldine d'Albano, the examination of yesterday went to show, that by artifice, such as the spirit of evil is often known to inspire, you have contrived to conceal the part you had in

the escape of the accursed heretic and perjured nun Camilla, from the dungeons of your convent. I cannot be blinded by this subtile trickery—for I know you—but there are others, to whom all men are bound to bow their minds, who deem you innocent. Innocent therefore you are, from all that, in my humble duty to the church, I have deposed against you.”

The extacy of Juliet, on hearing these unexpected words, was so great, that totally forgetful of the tremendous presence in which she stood, she was springing forward to throw herself into the arms of her aunt. Happily Father Laurence was close beside her, and the tight grasp of his powerful arm at once restored her recollection.

The words were not less welcome, and hardly less unexpected to Geraldine, than to her niece; but she only bowed her head in answer to them, and waited, without further movement, to learn the pleasure of the court concerning her.

Isidore had risen to speak, and when he

ceased, replaced himself upon the bench; but he had scarcely done so, when another figure arose at a short distance from him, and in a voice whose deep hoarse tone might have made any words sound alarming, he said:—

“Geraldine d’Albano, I too have somewhat to say concerning you; and may the ears, which can only hear to understand aright, listen to me, and to you!”

He ceased: and silence like that of the grave followed. He seemed to pause, that his words might be pondered, and understood by all. After the interval of some minutes, he addressed the Fiscal Proctor, but the only words he pronounced were—“The oath!”

The officer then raised aloft the large crucifix of ebony that lay upon the table, while the familiars led the prisoner forward, and placed her right hand upon the Evangelists. The Fiscal Proctor repeated the oath, binding the person taking it to speak nothing but the truth, and Geraldine bowed her head, which was received in testimony of assent to it.

"Now then," said the hoarse Inquisitor, "answer me!"

"Geraldine d'Albano, did you, on the twentieth day of June last, walk in a wood or forest on the domain of the Count d'Albano near Torre Vecchia?"

"I did."

"Did you, on that day, and in that place, meet a young man dressed in green and silver?"

"I did."

"Write!" exclaimed the voice of Isidore.

"Did you," continued the former voice, "on that day, and in that same wood or forest, suffer that young man, in vesture of green and silver, to kneel at your feet?"

"My gracious judges," said the Abbess firmly, "if I answer YES to this, though the word should be true, the inference would be most foully false; yet can I not explain it, without doing wrong to one most near and dear to me."

"Geraldine d'Albano," said a voice from the

higher bench, "you are sworn to answer truly, let the consequence be what it may."

The same harsh voice that had questioned her before, then resumed:—

"Did that youth in green and silver kneel at your feet, and kiss your hand?"

"He did!"

"Write!" said the voice of Bartone.

"Is this enough? or shall I question further?" said the examining Inquisitor, turning round, and addressing those above him.

Many voices were now heard conferring together, though their low tone prevented what they said, from being distinctly audible; till one, not louder than the rest, but having that accent of authority which enforces hearing, uttered these words:—

"Let not appearances abuse you, brethren. This holy Abbess spake the truth, when she said, that the inference you would draw from her avowal would be foully false."

"Misericordia et Justitia!" exclaimed the

inquisitor who had examined her, raising his arms to heaven, as he quoted the inscription of the holy banner:—"Blessed be the union! let not the first deface the last. Call forward those who witnessed this abomination."

The Fiscal Proctor spoke to a familiar near him, and Father Laurence was led forward. The crucifix was again raised and the oath administered, but he was not summoned by name, nor was any indication given, who or from whence he might be.

"Witness! speak according to your oath, and say if you ever saw Geraldine d'Albano do aught that was inconsistent either with her vow as a professed nun, or her high station as an appointed Abbess?"

"I have."

"What have you seen?"

"I have seen her, during the month of June last past, wandering in the woods near the castle of Albano, divested of her holy weeds, and wearing no mark of her religious calling, or her conventual rank."

“ Know you aught else ?”

“ I know that she was seen in an attitude of unchaste endearment with a man.”

“ How know you this ?”

“ By the word of a most holy priest, who himself witnessed the foul abomination.”

Again the venerable court was agitated by an evident diversity of opinion ; but the word “ Silence !” uttered by the voice that seemed gifted with a power to hush all tumult, once more restored order.

“ There is another witness,” said the examining Inquisitor ; “ let her appear.”

Juliet was now led forward. From the moment she had heard her aunt declared innocent of the escape of Camilla, the most perfect calmness and self-possession had returned to her ; the accusation which followed appeared to her, in comparison, as light as air ; and when she was at length called upon to answer, she did so without the slightest hesitation or faltering.

The oath was administered to her in the usual form, and she was addressed by the same

equivocal appellation of "witness," without any further designation.

"Witness, speak according to your oath. Do you know Geraldine d'Albano?"

"I do," was uttered in accents clear and firm, by the silver voice of Juliet.

"Who is that?" said an Inquisitor, starting on his feet.

"A sworn witness," answered an aged voice from above. "The examination must proceed."

The examining Inquisitor was still on his feet, but hesitated for a moment, till "proceed!" was again repeated from above. The same question was then put, and nearly in the same words, as that first addressed to Father Laurence.

"Have you ever seen or heard this Geraldine d'Albano do, or say, aught inconsistent with her vow as a professed nun?"

"Never!" was the unexpected reply, and the effect produced by this single word was so great, that many minutes elapsed, before even the voice which was heard above all else, could restore the silence it commanded.

The examining Inquisitor had sat down amid the tumult, but when order was at length restored, he did not resume the investigation.

An old and evidently feeble man, on the higher bench, then rose to supply his place.

“Speak, witness, according to your oath,” he repeated, solemnly.—“Know you aught of the interview that has been spoken of between Geraldine d’Albano, and a young man who met her in the woods of Albano?”

“I do.”

“Recollect yourself, and on your oath tell all you know.”

“That youth was my affianced husband,” said Juliet, solemnly: “I am niece to the Abbess of Sant’ Catherina’s; and when she yielded her consent to our union, her accepted nephew offered homage and thanks upon his bended knee.”

“Enough!” uttered the pre-eminent voice from above; but at the same time Isidore started on his feet, and exclaimed—

“How is this?—novice of Sant’ Catherina’s, how is this? Did your saintly aunt receive a

lover's vows for you, and then lead you as a novice to her cloister?"

"She did!" replied Juliet, nothing daunted: "for such," she added, after a moment's impressive pause,—“for such was my father's will."

"Enough!" again uttered the voice from above:—"Juliet d'Albano is now her noble father's heiress,—and may her love and faith to the husband of her choice, equal in courage and constancy what she has this day shown to her illustrious aunt!"

There was a power in the voice that spoke these words which seemed to make itself felt, as if by magic;—not only was every other hushed to listen to it, but when it ceased, a deep drawn breath appeared to relieve the profound attention with which it had been heard.

Juliet guessed not who spoke—but the unlooked-for kindness overpowered her, and she stretched out a hand to those who stood near her, for support. It was one of the dark officials who approached to sustain her; Father Laurence

was no longer near; and it is probable, that the deep shadows of that ample room never before appeared so welcome to those they fell upon, as they did at that moment to him.

There was now a movement among the Inquisitors who filled the highest bench, and who were of no lesser rank than the Cardinals of Rome, as though they would approach the noble prisoner, where still she stood before them; but one amongst them made a sign with his raised arm, and they remained stationary. A word was then whispered in the ear of the Fiscal Proctor, who immediately proclaimed aloud—

“This trial is not ended, but adjourned.—The court will meet to-morrow; the prisoner is again remanded to answer what then shall further be brought against her.”

On this, the familiars once more took possession of their prisoner, and Geraldine was again led to her solitary prison. She was somewhat startled at the final event of the day, which seemed to leave her fate still doubtful; but experienced delight, beyond the power of any fear

to check, at the noble daring, and the devoted affection, of her adopted child. How she had contrived, at a moment of such critical importance, to find her way into the presence of the tribunal, was a mystery too great for her even to attempt to understand; nor did she waste a thought upon it.—That Juliet had again saved her, was certain; and the conviction of this caused her a degree of happiness, which no detail of particulars could much increase. Yet even this satisfaction was not long denied her. Within a quarter of an hour after she had re-entered her prison, the door of it was again unbarred, and a figure appeared, led by two familiars, whose whole person was concealed by an enormous cloak and hood. The men first closed the door behind them, and then returned to remove the blinding disguise from their new prisoner, when Geraldine discovered, with feelings not difficult to conceive, that Juliet, her friend, her daughter, and her deliverer, was brought to share her confinement.

We have too many scenes of greater importance

before us, to permit any lengthened description of this delightful interview; never was that wise saw, "It is not the *WHERE* but the *WHO*, that makes happiness, or misery," more perfectly exemplified than on this occasion, when two delicate females, shut up to pass the night in a chamber of the Inquisition, with one hard pallet between them on which to rest, felt in possession of more full contentment than had ever fallen to the lot of either, when sheltered by the stately roofs they called their homes. They slept not much, but when towards the morning, their hearts relieved of all that weighed upon them, they lay down together on their sorry couch, the sweet and profound rest they enjoyed, was well worth all the lighter slumber of a long night's ordinary repose.

They discussed, but not with any feeling of serious alarm, the business that was announced for the morrow. Juliet fancied that she could guess the subject of it—but so great was her delight in watching the calm and sweet serenity of her aunt's countenance, that she would not

disturb it by any mention of what she knew would send back her fancy to brood and mourn over the past.

Geraldine herself spoke of it lightly.

“I know the voice that announced it, Juliet,” said she, while something like a smile was on her lips, “but you do not; I have been greatly favoured—and I suspect,” she added, in a low whisper, as she laid her head beside that of Juliet, on their pillow—“I suspect that it was not so much Geraldine d’Albano they were determined to acquit, as their trusty and well-beloved servant, the Abbess of Sant’ Catherina’s—Isidore knows not the court of Rome so well as I do, Juliet.”

The officials of the Inquisition entered the prison of Geraldine on the following morning, at nearly the same hour as before, to lead her and her companion into the hall of judgment. There were now four of them, who still preserved the same implicit silence, and wore the same impenetrable masks as before; but there was evidently more of respect and decorum in their

manner of throwing over their prisoners the dark garb which was to envelope them. They were led, blindly and carefully as before, into the presence of the awful tribunal, and as soon as their guides quitted their hold, they arranged their hoods in such a manner as to see all that passed, as distinctly as the dim light of the sable chamber would permit.

They had been left by their guides standing close together, at a short distance from the place where prisoners were stationed to be examined, and a moment afterwards, seats were brought for them, which they occupied, upon a sign given by the Fiscal Proctor.

The court was already full, and almost immediately after they had taken their seats, the order was spoken aloud—to bring in the prisoner.

With the silent celerity with which all orders there were obeyed, a figure instantly stood before them, as if brought there by magic, for not the slightest sound had been produced by his approach.

From a distant part of the hall, the name of "Francesco Garroni," was pronounced aloud, and a moment after, as if by an echo, it came repeated from the contrary side of the chamber.

"Francesco Garroni is here," replied the prisoner.

On hearing the name of her old pensioner, Geraldine felt more than ever at a loss to conceive what the question was, which should this day be discussed concerning her: but she felt no mixture of alarm, and prepared to listen, with an interest which had very little of selfish feeling in it, to what should follow.

At this moment, the ear of Juliet was sensible of a movement near her; she turned her head, and saw behind the seat she occupied, the dark figure of a man gliding silently away. It was not, however, her quick eye alone that discerned him.

"Officials! let no one pass the doors—neither counsellors nor cardinals, till the court breaks up!" said the same voice, which had created such strong effect the day before.

No sound was heard in answer, but Juliet

fancied that she could discern a slight movement among a group of figures who were standing at one end of the tribunal, as if there were no room for them on the seats.

The Inquisitor, who now rose to examine the prisoner, was one of those seated on the lower bench, and the voice was one which had not been heard in the court, since the trial of Geraldine began.

“ Francesco Garroni, are you prepared to take the oath ? ”

“ I am prepared.”

It was then administered as before.

“ Now, recollect yourself, and answer distinctly to such questions as I shall ask. Did you know Caroline, Countess of Albano, the mother of the present Count ? ”

“ I knew her well.”

The composure of Geraldine utterly failed her at the mention of her mother's name ; had she not been seated, the attention of the court would probably have been disturbed—but she struggled against the emotion which assailed her, and lis-

tened, in breathless eagerness, for what was to follow.

“Speak what you know of her,” continued the examiner.

“It is all summed within one dreadful word,” replied Garroni:—“she was a heretic.”

“How know you this?”

“It was a truth she sought not to conceal; I was a servant of some standing in the family of the late Count, when he brought her, as his bride, from England. Had it not been for that foul stain, her coming would have been hailed as a blessing sent from Heaven—and even when this was known to all, there were some among us who avowed their love and reverence for her.”

“Francesco Garroni, were you ever one of these?”

“Never! I trembled when I looked at her; for her marvellous beauty, and her gentle temper, won upon all men—and I feared for my pure faith.—I strove to hate her.”

“Did you succeed in this? or did you, too, fail in the trial?”

The prisoner was silent for a moment, and then replied—

“ My deeds—which I am now before you to confess—will answer that.”

“ Did any in the household embrace her accursed faith?”

“ None: we were saved from this, by the zeal of one, who, ere the Count had been a year returned, was appointed Confessor at the Castle of Albano.”

“ Who was this holy man?”

“ Isidore Bartone, a monk of the order of St. Dominic.”

“ How worked his zeal among you?”

“ By prayer, by fasting, by teaching us to know, that certain destruction here and hereafter must be our lot, if we did not loathe and abhor the infected heretic.”

“ And did all resist the danger?”

“ All: her noble husband learned to shudder at the fearful crime he had committed, and shunned her presence; her young son was taught to flee from her, and servants only

retained their places near her, by receiving absolution for the needful, but unwilling service they performed."

"Was your Confessor beloved among you?"

"No; he was feared and hated, save by me; I worshipped him as a saint, already ripe for heaven. Till he came, I lived in daily horror of eternal doom, for the weakness of my hatred towards this specious heretic. I confessed it to him, and he soothed me; he told me that my heart was right, and that I must pray day and night for strength to show my hatred. I did pray, and thought that Heaven heard me—Heaven has heard me since—but then—yet I seemed guarded from the deadly peril by his holy care. Save one, all turned from the daring heretic; save one—husband, son, retainers, all shrank from her, as from death and perdition, save one—and that one was her daughter."

Tears, that most seasonably relieved her swelling heart, rolled down the cheeks of Geraldine at these words; and she almost blessed the lips that spoke them.

"Write!" was hoarsely murmured by some one on the bench.

"Yes, write," repeated the prisoner with emphasis, "let it be written, that it may atone for my sinful soul on the last day."

"What of this daughter?" said the Inquisitor who had first questioned him; "go on."

"That daughter clung to her," continued Garroni, "and by her tender love seemed to rob all hatred of its sting. I loved the child, and have kneeled for hours before her patron saint, praying that this her filial tenderness might not destroy her. I think these prayers were heard. So docile, so pious, so catholic a child, never knelt to receive absolution; I think my prayers were heard, but the Confessor told me often, that still he feared for her; his judgment was, that she must perish everlastingly, unless she became a nun. Loth was I to believe this, for I knew that she would never leave her mother. My lord the Count, who pined beneath the weight of his heavy sin, implored her to consent; it was the only hope now left, by which he might win heaven; daily

did his Confessor repeat, that, if his child became a nun, his crime would be forgiven. Years rolled over his head—he was bowed to earth by sin and sorrow, yet still this child resisted. The priest then came to me. He spoke to me as his friend and equal, and I listened to him as to a saint walking upon the earth. He told me that the young Geraldine must surely perish, that the wrath of God was on her—that her accursed mother held her back from heaven, and that nothing but that mother's speedy death could save her innocent child. Day by day, he repeated this to me: day by day, he drew me nearer to him by his flattering kindness. He told me that I was too good, too holy for the world, and offered me a place within his convent—my very soul clung to him.”

The old man ceased to speak, and it was evident to all who heard him, that his strength was failing. A seat was brought for him, and a cordial put to his lips: after the interval of a few moments he resumed, but in a voice so tremulous, that the most earnest atten-

was necessary to enable the hearers to distinguish his words—

“ By degrees the Confessor began to hint to me, that he feared he was himself in danger of the wrath of Heaven, for suffering this dreadful sin to overtake the young and pious Geraldine. He said me he had been visited by angels in a dream, who bade him remove the heretic from the church.”

A heavy groan burst from the breast of Geraldine, and the Fiscal whispered to her a proposal, that she should retire.

“ Not to save my life !” she replied aloud,

avails," exclaimed the old man, suddenly raising his feeble voice to a tone of frightful energy ;—
"What avails that I should seek as slowly to avow the deed I have done—hear it at once !—He bade me poison her—and it was done !"

Garroni rose from the chair on which the attendants had placed him, as he spoke the last words; but as soon as they were uttered, he sank upon it again, and the officials crowded round him. The floor of the apartment was immediately covered with the counsellors and judges who rushed towards him. They eagerly sought for further particulars of the dreadful crime he had disclosed, but in vain. The old man never spoke again. Geraldine drew towards him, as if to learn some further details of the fearful deed, the vague suspicion of which had so long clouded her existence. She shuddered as she hung over the man who had destroyed her mother; but a feeling stronger still urged her to extend her own arm to sustain his drooping head, as she exclaimed :—

“One word, Garroni; speak one word more—my wretched father, did he know?”

No answer was returned. Her strength failed to sustain the heavy weight which rested against her, and Garroni lay at her feet a rigid corse. Juliet stood beside him, almost as motionless and as cold. The dreadful disclosure of Garroni, though completely unexpected by Geraldine, whose suspicions had ever glanced towards him, was not so to Juliet; and she felt that she had herself been the means of leading the old man to make this awful atonement for his crime. The justice of the sequel could not efface its horror, and it was long ere she fully recovered from the shock.

In spite of the almost supernatural terrors in which they have dressed themselves, Inquisitors are men, and the scene that had just passed, made them feel they were so. The body of this miserable victim of bigotry was removed. The trembling women, whose presence had increased the horror of the disclosure, were then

led from the hall, and with the usual attention to secrecy, conveyed in closed litters to the palace of the Cardinal Romaldi, where they were met, and most kindly welcomed by his sister, the Abbess of St. Ildefonse. The person of Isidore had been secured before they left the hall; but it was long before they learned, to what fate he was reserved. In truth, nothing at that time so greatly encumbered and embarrassed the course of ecclesiastical justice, as any disclosure of flagrant crime within the sacred pale which guarded the dignitaries of the Roman Catholic Church; nor was there any question which puzzled them so profoundly to decide, as to whether the mischief done to the holy cause of their religion by impugning one of her distinguished ministers, or that which might arise from the scandal of suffering a notorious crime to go unpunished, was the most to be deprecated. Isidore Bartone had for many weeks to endure all the complicated suffering of disappointment, imprisonment, and uncertainty, while this important question was debated in the conclave respecting

himself. It was, however, immediately decided upon, and that by the very highest authority, that he was no longer Abbot of St. Andrea's; to which important station the devout and gentle spirited Father Anselmo was raised, to the entire satisfaction of the whole community; nor was it long ere it was equally well understood, that no public or condign punishment would be inflicted on one, whose name had formerly been so favourably known in the catholic world. Whatever his fate might be, it was the intention of those by whom it was decided, that public scorn should make no part of it, and this intention was fulfilled.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Oh ! 'tis the curse of love, and still approved,
When women cannot love, where they're beloved.

SHAKESPEARE.

A SCENE of life, most completely unlike any she had before witnessed, now broke upon Juliet. She had been hitherto known to as small a circle as was well possible for one in her rank of life. But now all Rome was talking of her. A veil of impenetrable mystery generally envelopes the proceedings of the holy office; and there is, perhaps, no great injustice in the belief, which has prevailed in all ages, and in all lands, that this arises from its acts being often such, as their agents would gladly hide from every eye.

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gagement she had proclaimed, was considered as broken off, by her subsequent dedication to the cloister; for there were not wanting, among those who heard her allude to this engagement, some powerful and venerable advocates for the youthful suitors who now sought her hand. Most of these proposals, indeed, were made by proxy, being ceremoniously transmitted by the relatives of the gentleman, to the illustrious aunt of the lady. But there was one among them who wooed in good earnest for himself; this was the young and handsome Marquis of St. Omeda, nephew to the Cardinal Romaldi, in whose palace Geraldine and her niece still continued to be guests. This circumstance not only gave him an opportunity for pleading himself his suit, in person, but of becoming very seriously interested in the success of it.

Morgante and Olive, who were both re-established in their places near the young heiress, were now for the first time made sensible of the importance attached to them; for the favour of both was propitiated by sundry tokens of gene-

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posed to treat the young Ma
with particular distinction,

liness to her manner, which not only raised the young man's hopes, but made them every hour of more vital importance to his happiness. At length the time fixed for their departure drew nigh—one day only remained of their promised stay, and on that day St. Omeda resolved to know his fate. It was difficult to find a moment, in which the Abbess and her niece were not surrounded with company; but, on this last day, Morgante was bribed, more by the deep earnestness of the young man's request, than by the glittering present which accompanied it, to admit him to the private saloon appropriated to the Abbess and her niece, before the usual hour of their receiving company. Juliet was engaged at the moment he entered, in carefully arranging in a casket the trinkets she had purchased, by the direction of her father, for lady Claudia di Montecielo. Her aunt was standing by her, and listening with a smile to Juliet's earnest expressions of satisfaction in the hopes of the Count.

The quick eye of the lover was instantly

cheek blushed to scarlet, and whether to retreat, or to advance him with a cheerful frankness, not banish his alarm, effectually giving evidence of it by following himself beside her, determined to hear from her own mouth, awaited him. The Abbess, in her apartment, for the purpose of a packet of letters for her confidant, was about to accompany Juliet, to be conveyed to Ancona by Ildefonse, who, like herself, was to return to Rome on the following day.

St. Omeda sat, for a moment, in the occupation of Juliet, and

“ I believe you are very right,” replied Juliet, with a smile.

“ And when is it to grace the brows of lady Juliet d’Albano ?” said the young man gravely.

“ Never, my lord.”

“ Does that mean that you will never wear it ?” said he, with renewed animation ; “ or that you will only do so, when you cease to be lady Juliet d’Albano ?”

“ It means,” replied Juliet, laughing, “ that it was never intended for me at all.”

“ Thank Heaven !” he exclaimed fervently. “ You are, then, still free ?”

Juliet was both vexed and embarrassed. Nothing could be farther from her wish, than that her agreeable new friend should declare himself her lover.

“ What ! is he too hoping to catch the heiress ?” thought she with bitterness. “ All then are selfish and interested alike !”—Such were her thoughts, but she said nothing, till St. Omeda, encouraged by her silence, and the heightened colour of her cheek, ventured to seize her hand,

and exclaimed with all the ardour of genuine passion—

“ Oh, Juliet ! if this hand be free, bestow it upon me ! If your heart be again your own, let me win and wear it, as the dearest treasure earth or heaven could give me ! ”

Never was love offered, and answering love sought for in return, with more deep and unmixed sincerity than now ; but Juliet did not do her lover justice ; she imagined his proposal flowed from the same motive which, she could hardly doubt, had influenced others who had addressed her, and, both piqued at believing this, and vexed at her disappointment in the character of a man she had really esteemed, she answered almost petulantly—

“ Though these jewels, my lord, are not intended to decorate me, they are for one who, in becoming a bride, will render all suit to me as vain, as if they were for my own bridal ;—they are destined for the future wife of my father, my lord Marquis ; and when these are worn, I shall no longer be an heiress —— ”

“And think you by that you will become less dear to me? Oh! know me better, Juliet,” said the young man earnestly. “I love you—nor could the gain or loss of the fairest and the broadest lands that ever dowered woman, either lessen or increase such love as mine!”

Juliet felt in an instant, that she had done him wrong; she coloured violently, and said, in a voice of much emotion—

“Forgive me, St. Omeda! It is not to you that I should testify the feelings, to which the addresses I have received since I have been at Rome, have given birth—believe me, I have always held you to be far unlike the rest; and I would have gladly left you with the persuasion, that all the kindness you have shown us, arose from the same disinterested friendship which we feel for you.”

“And must this exclude a warmer sentiment, lady Juliet? Will you for ever count it a mark of baseness to love you, because you have been proclaimed your father’s heiress?”

“Fortunately,” replied Juliet, carefully con-

tinuing her occupation, and securing the jewels from all chance of injury on their journey; "fortunately, the blunder, which has led to all this, cannot last long.—My father is on the eve of marriage with the young lady, for whom these trinkets are designed."

"Thank Heaven for the news!" said the Marquis. "Now, at least, I may hope to be exempt from this degrading suspicion;—now, at least, you may believe it possible that you can be loved for yourself alone.—Juliet, let my life prove it to you——"

As Juliet had declared the chagrin, which she evidently felt at this declaration of love, arose from her general suspicion of the interested motives of all who addressed her, it might have been expected, that the proof of sincerity, now given by her lover, would have produced a different feeling; but, to the unspeakable mortification of St. Omeda, Juliet's speaking countenance expressed even more vexation than before. Whether it would have soothed this mortification, to have known that it was her real and

sincere regard for him which occasioned this, may be doubted. Such, however, was assuredly the fact; and while something very like a frown contracted her smooth brow, her heart shrank from the painful task of telling him that she loved another.

It was at this moment, and before she had replied to his last words, that her aunt re-entered the room. Though certainly not deeply versed in scenes of love, Geraldine could not mistake the meaning of that, now before her.

The heightened colour, and discomposed look of Juliet; the eager and anxious eye of the young man, which was rivetted on her face; and the mute silence of both, were intelligible, even to a nun; and she was in the act of retiring again, when Juliet sprang towards her, saying—

“Do not leave me.—It is you must answer him—I cannot do it.”

These were not words to lead a lover to despair; and with renewed hope of winning all he wished, the Marquis rose, and respectfully

addressing the Abbess, begged to be permitted, through her, to repeat the offer he had just made of his hand and fortune to her niece. Geraldine had taken the extended hand of Juliet, when she had stepped forward to prevent her retreat, and still held it—but now Juliet sought to withdraw it, and make her escape.

“No, Juliet, you must not go,” said the Abbess. “The only proof of my true affection, that I can give you, is now and always to leave you mistress of yourself. I will not quit the room, since you wish me to remain in it, but it is you that must answer this proposal.”

“It is cruel to say so,” exclaimed Juliet, bursting into tears. “You know all—then why not spare me?”

“Go, then, my love,” said Geraldine;—“if, indeed, I do know all, I will spare you—and yet,” she continued, still holding her hand, “in such a case as this, there must be no mistakes, Juliet.—Do you wish me to tell the Marquis of St. Omeda, that you love another?”

“Yes,” said Juliet firmly, but at the same

moment covering her face with both her hands.

This was enough. Omeda waited to hear no commentary, but fled from the room, and from the house; and within an hour was on his road to join his regiment on the frontiers of Germany.

In the good old times of which I write, beautiful young ladies were so certain of meeting with abundance of lovers, that the incident just recounted would scarcely be worth recording, were it not for the proof it offered of Juliet's pertinacious adherence to the memory of an adventure, which must, by this time, almost have appeared to her like a dream, so completely had it passed away, leaving no trace but the fond idea which she still cherished at her heart.

The precipitate retreat of the young Marquis left the aunt and niece standing side by side, near a door opposite to the one by which he escaped; and so they continued for several minutes: the tears of Juliet still flowed, and she felt doubtful, if the frank avowal she had just uttered, might be fully approved by her aunt.

But when, at length, she raised her eyes to the dear face, in which she had learned to seek the reflection of all her own feelings, before she could be quite certain they were right, all her doubts vanished; for never did approval, pleasure, and affection, beam more brightly from any eyes, than from those with which Geraldine returned her glance. "And you really love him still, my Juliet?" she exclaimed in an accent of surprise and pleasure; "how benignly has Providence atoned for all the misery of my early life, by the happiness that seems opening before me!"

"And have you not forgotten this poor Hubert?" said Juliet, while love and hope again dimpled her soft cheek. "Why, then, you cruel aunt, why did you never name him?"

"Because I saw you surrounded by lovers—because flattery and adulation were besetting you on all sides—and it was not by my importunately uttering the name of Hubert in your ear, that I would have had his image recalled to your heart. If in truth you loved him, I knew

he would not want my voice to plead for him ; and if not, it were better that you should forget that you had ever seen him."

" Oh, my dear aunt !" said Juliet, " you know not what you have made me suffer by this proud care for Hubert's dignity—I know," she added, turning away her eyes, as if she would not suffer them to ask questions which she dared not allow her lips to speak—" I know there is some mysterious link between you, which may perhaps keep him, his conduct, and his intentions, for ever before your eyes—and as you ceased to name him to me, I thought that he had wished you should."

" My sweetest Juliet ! how can I ever pay you for all the perfect trust, the forbearing confidence you have shown me ? Not all you have done for me—and twice you have saved me from destruction—yet all this touches me not like your gentle submission to the secrecy I have imposed upon myself, on a subject that regards you so nearly."

" Should I love you as I do," replied Juliet,

"if I could think, for a moment, that you would inflict this penance on me without necessity?"

"You do me justice, my best love," said Geraldine, much affected both by her words and manner; "and yet, Juliet, I sometimes think, that in holding this mystery with you, I submit myself rather to the words of my promise, than to the spirit of it—I so long to tell you all——"

"No, no," replied Juliet, playfully laying her hand upon the lips of Geraldine, "you shall not tell me now—I have borne this mystery when fear and sorrow lay in every hour's silence—but now I can well endure that it should last a little longer—for were we not to meet again, you would know it—and you would tell me so."

"You reason admirably, dearest; and I will not press upon you a confidence, which truly I have no right to give—a few weeks, it may be a few days, will end your suspense; and unless your father should be more vehement in opposition than I now expect, all will, I think, go smoothly."

The remainder of the day was spent in speaking and receiving farewells—the highest and the holiest seemed to contend, as to who should show most honour and esteem to the Abbess of Sant' Catherina's; as for Juliet, not even the mortification which must have arisen, in many quarters, from her refusal of the alliances offered her, could prevent her winning beauty, grace, and sweetness, from leaving an impression in her favour, that was long remembered and acknowledged through the highest circles in Rome.

On the following morning they set forth for Albano, escorted by a numerous body of guards, evidently appointed by the authorities, as much for the purpose of testifying respect for the Abbess, as for ensuring her safety.

There was a healthy principle in Juliet's mind, which prevented any happy circumstance of her destiny to pass by her unheeded: the contrast between her present feelings, and those with which she had lately travelled the same road, embellished every league; and Morgante himself, bursting with glee as he was, while re-

membering all he had seen, and anticipating all the glory of recounting it, wore not a countenance of more gay and glowing happiness than Juliet. Geraldine, too, never felt more sensibly, than during this happy journey, that if her strange destiny had robbed her of much that was desirable, it had also left her much that was delightful. The honours she had received, however, certainly made no part of her happiness.

“Never,” said she, in answer to some remarks of Juliet’s,—“never do I feel so ill at ease with myself, as when this catholic applause is showered on me, and yet it is from no feeling that it is unmerited: I know I have done much towards turning evil into good. Years, aye, centuries must roll over the race of man, before they shall all learn what true religion means, before they shall all know that God did not make them what they are, that their restless spirits, their ardent enterprise, their fond affections, should all be crushed and buried within a cloister—but till they find this out, it is good to show them, that even in the way their ill-judged zeal would lead

us, there still may be kindness, peace, and purity.—This has been the object of my life, in the unnatural situation into which circumstances pushed me—and I have not failed in it—yet, dearest Juliet, the praise they give, wounds me more than it can please me.”

“I see not wherefore,” replied Juliet; “they praise you for your strict, yet gentle rule; they praise you for removing a reproach which struck the interests that they valued most; they praise you for proving to the world, that all the evil and disgrace, that is spoken of, in convents, is not the result of the institution, but of the faulty use of power in those that rule them,—why should praise so just as this, fail to give you pleasure?”

“Because, though they have known my acts, which have in truth been open to every eye—they know not me. I have seemed the thing I was not—and though my simulation has done harm to none—still it is hateful to myself.”

“I cannot understand this,” persisted Juliet, “you allow that your life has been one of active

usefulness, and of heart-felt piety—and yet you reproach yourself?”

“No, I do not reproach myself. It was to ensure the safety of my mother, that I first learnt to practise, with scrupulous exactness, the outward seeming of a catholic, while my heart worshipped in all the simple purity of Luther’s holy faith—it was only needful to continue this, when partly for my own, and partly for my poor father’s sake, I shrank from further struggle into the deep repose of the cloister. No—I cannot reproach myself; but yet, I for ever feel that I dislike myself,—that I am not what I would be, and that nature meant me for something nobler.”

“Then be that something, my beloved aunt,” cried Juliet warmly; “every motive has long ceased, which led you to embrace a life so discordant to your principles—leave it at once—resign your rule—and live for me !—”

The ardour with which she spoke, might have gone far towards persuading one who so dearly loved her, that what she said was “ wisest, best,”

even if every word she uttered had not echoed the exact feelings of the listener's heart. Geraldine answered with fervour equal to her own :—

“If such be your wish, my Juliet, such shall be the end of my eventful history—and I will see Sant' Catherina's no more.”

This conversation took place at one of the stations where they stopped for the night, on their journey towards Albano, and its effect upon Juliet was such, as to make her feel every circumstance not connected with her aunt, and with the years of happiness which she anticipated for them both, as almost too worthless to be remembered.

If Geraldine had ever doubted the strength of the attachment she had inspired in the warm-hearted and artless Juliet, the extreme delight she evinced at the prospect that now opened before her, must have sufficed to convince her of it. The idea of possessing her affection and society, unfettered by the hated restraint of the convent, inspired Juliet with a thousand plans for future enjoyment.

In the presence of Olive, who accompanied them in the litter, she could not openly discuss all the delightful schemes which the contemplation of the future suggested; but there was little need for her doing so in order to be understood by her friend—a word, a look, a slight caress, totally uncalled for by any thing that was passing, sufficiently explained to Geraldine, how her mind was occupied.

“Holy Mary!” exclaimed Olive; “how my lord the Count will storm, Signora, when he hears the history of our wicked Confessor! Whom do you think we shall have for our new Confessor, Signora?”

“It is quite impossible for me to tell you, Olive,” replied her mistress, adding, in an accent of most exhilarating happiness, “Oh, my dear, dear aunt!”

“Ah, very true,” resumed the waiting-woman, whom no feeling of deference could keep silent for half an hour together; “I do not wonder, Signora, that you are glad to hold the holy Abbess safe and sound in your arms again.

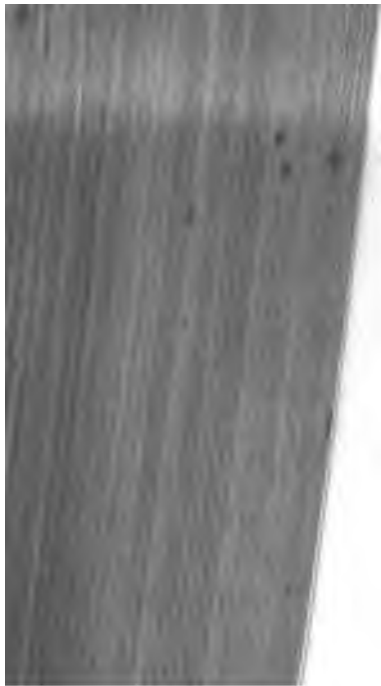
Ah, Signora, if I had not told you all, who knows what might have happened?"

Some happy thought floated along Juliet's imagination at this moment, and looking earnestly in the face of her aunt, she exclaimed, "For ever, and for ever!"

"Well! considering all things that have happened to you, Signora, it is no great wonder if you are almost out of your wits with joy; and to be sure you do look and speak rather wild, I think."

Notwithstanding that the happiness which lay in the heart of each, had made their journey delightful, Geraldine and her niece joyfully welcomed the first distant glimpse of the lofty towers of Albano; for both longed for more unrestrained conversation, than their present mode of travelling permitted.

The happy result of the accusation which had been so unadvisedly laid against the Abbess, was duly forwarded by an express to her brother, and both herself and Juliet were secretly expecting, with something like anticipated weariness,



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from Rome, the day my aunt was removed from the holy office?"

"Dispatches addressed to me, lady Juliet, are not likely to miscarry on the road."

"If you have received these, dear sir, you know as much concerning Father Laurence as we do; we have never heard of him since."

"I fear, Theodore," said the Abbess, kindly, "that you will miss the services of this unworthy man—and yet the duplicity of his conduct has been such, that it is difficult to regret his departure——."

"His departure is certainly not likely to cause you much disquietude, lady Geraldine.—Doubtless, you have your own reasons for what you do—though, as your convent is pretty nearly the richest in Italy, I see not what promotion you can either look for or desire."

A glance was exchanged between the sister and the daughter of the splenetic nobleman, which each interpreted into—"Never mind it—let us take no notice of his ill-humour:" and, accordingly, the two ladies seated themselves.

near him, and endeavoured to lead the conversation to such topics, as must inevitably be interesting to him.

"Our cousin, the Cardinal, inquired for you most kindly, Signor Padre," said Juliet, with her sweetest smile.

"And a friend more exalted still, Gregory himself, spoke often of you," added the Abbess.

The Count d'Albano replied only by a groan.

"I am sure, my dear father, that you are not well," said Juliet, approaching him to take his hand.

"How can any man be well," replied the Count, holding his hand in such a position, as to make the performance of this little *agacerie* as difficult as possible; "how can any man be well, overwhelmed by sorrow and disgrace as I am? The servant—the friend—the spiritual guide, of twenty years' standing, driven away from me—and all my dearest hopes blasted by the disgraceful disclosure of—of—my sister's—heresy."

Juliet looked at her aunt in trembling, lest she should see again the high and haughty aspect,

which had heretofore so greatly pained her.— But no trace of such feelings was now visible. There was a slight smile, but it was more gay than scornful, as she said—

“ But the disclosure of this supposed heresy, dear Theodore, was so quickly followed by all the favour that the church could show, that the honour has surely well wiped out the disgrace.”

“ Too late !—too late !” replied the Count, with another groan ; “ the refusal of lady Claudia arrived before the news of your acquittal could be known to her.”

The mystery was now explained, and Juliet, at least, sympathised too sincerely in his disappointment, to feel the least inclination to make light of it.

Geraldine wisely withdrew, conscious that her presence could only irritate her brother, and Juliet then led him to speak at length of the refusal he had received, and the manner of it. She had now discovered the only effectual mode of removing his ill-humour. He talked to her

freely of his disappointment, and even condescended to show her the letter of the Duke di Montecielo.

By the perusal of this document, and the examination of its date, it became evident to Juliet, that the Count's age, and well-known ill-health, were the causes of this disappointment, and that it was written before the accusation against the Abbess could have been known. But she was careful not to point out either circumstance to the notice of her father; and with a sweet earnestness, which would have made an ordinary face look beautiful, she insisted upon the little importance which ought to be attached to one refusal, and that from the father of a girl who was not seventeen, when so many noble ladies might be found, who would doubtless receive his proposals with pleasure.

"Were I you, my dear father," said she, with cautious delicacy, "I would address some lady who was sufficiently mistress of herself to answer according to her own wishes. The public honours which have lately been conferred upon my

aunt, must shed some eclat upon our whole family; and I think you could never propose your alliance to any noble house at a more propitious moment."

The most profound and artful politician could have suggested no train of argument better calculated to produce the effect desired, than the kind spirit of Juliet had imagined; Italian ladies of an age to dispose of themselves, being then, as now, less likely to be fastidious, than their ambitious friends might have been for them, some half score years before. It was, however, perfectly impossible for the Count d'Albano to conceive that HE could be refused by any one, from any defect in himself; the flattering part of Juliet's hint, therefore, was all that reached his apprehension, and he replied to it in a manner which plainly showed its good effects.

"You speak with wisdom beyond your years, lady Juliet; it is doubtless so. Jealousy and envy are for ever met by those whom nature and fortune have made pre-eminently great.

The duke may prefer a son-in-law less conspicuously his superior; and for some years to come, his daughter must, as you well observe, be submitted to his sway. There are others—yes, many others,—who, it can hardly be doubted, would receive such a proposal differently.”

Having brought her father to this improved state of mind, she sought her aunt, and found her wearing the same air of placid happiness, which she had watched with such delight upon the journey.

“Oh, how he frightened me!” exclaimed Juliet; “I hardly dared to look at you! What would have become of me, had I seen you again assume that look which seems to mark a magic circle round you, within which none must enter.”

“Ah, Juliet,” replied the Abbess laughing, “that magic circle has long lost all its power with you. I should really be at a loss to frame my features into a look that might awe your encroaching spirit; tell me, how could it be done?”

“You are wrong, quite wrong; most totally

mistaken, my aunt; time was, when though I hailed your smiles, I could endure your frowns; but now—oh, do not try me!—indeed I could not bear it.”

Notwithstanding the many sources of contentment, which tended to render this return to Albano pleasurable, both to the aunt and niece, there was still much anxiety that mixed with it. There was not then, as now, a little post-office at Torre Vecchia, where tidings might have been safely deposited of all who were dear, and all who were distant; and unless the woods could have spoken, they had no means of knowing whether the friend of whom both equally wished to hear, had sought for either of them within its shelter, during their absence.

Geraldine, indeed, suggested that it was possible Morgante might learn by going to the little sea-port, whether any vessel, such as he well knew how to describe, had touched there. But the autumn was now far advanced, and the short evenings gave little time for rambling after supper. This meal had been served shortly

after their arrival, and it was decided between them, that the inquiries they were anxious to make, should be deferred till to-morrow.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Here didst thou dwell, in this enchanted cover.

BYRON.

THE absence of Father Laurence had been supplied by the attendance of a priest from Santa Croce, at the matin and vesper services of the chapel; but the poor Count certainly felt his loss very severely. When his strange adventure at Rome became known, there were not wanting among the community at Santa Croce, some who would willingly have taken his place. But hitherto the Count had clung to the hope that his favourite might return; and the lurking consciousness which lay at the bottom of his heart, that both Father Laurence had an especial

gift for exculpating himself, and he one as efficacious for believing all he might say, left little doubt upon his mind, that if the good-hearted man would but show himself again, he should find no difficulty in reinstating him in his holy office. It was for this reason that no successor had been yet appointed; but the statement brought from Rome by the ladies, pretty well destroyed all expectation of seeing him again; and before the obsequious Father Paolo left the castle after vespers, his offers of domestic attendance were accepted. He had, however, some arrangement to make with the Prior, before he left his convent, and some other trifling affairs to settle, which made it convenient for him to delay entering upon his new office till the following week.

As soon as breakfast was ended on the following morning, the Count retired to his library to decide what address he should put upon his next proposal of marriage. Morgante tripped with a light foot, and a lighter heart, over the well-known hill, to Torre Vecchia, and Geraldine

and her niece wandered into the garden, and from thence down the steep bank, now stripped of all its gay blossoms, across the little mountain-stream, and up the opposite path that led to the long-forsaken chestnut tree.

They had set out to walk without any determinate object before them, and had pursued this path by tacit consent, and unconscious sympathy of feeling; but as they drew near to the spot which had been so interesting to both, Juliet exclaimed:—

“ I wonder we should come here, dearest aunt. It is not wise; there is no point of all my ancient haunts, which I should visit with so little pleasure as the poor chestnut tree; let us go back.”

But they had already reached the boundary of the little wood, and ere they turned, the eyes of both took one glance towards the tree, the bank, the water, all so pregnant with sad and sweet remembrances.

“ Who is that?” said Juliet, grasping the arm of her companion.

— Himself? replied the Abbess, moving hastily forward: but in a moment she stopped, for Juliet was no longer by her side, and turning back, she saw the poor girl standing with her hands clasped, her head bent forward, and with that sort of wild examination, that seems to assure if what it sees be real.

— Juliet! Juliet! this is sad weakness; come with me, dearest—it is himself, I tell you; she took her trembling arm as she spoke, and led her onward: but hardly had she quitted the covert of this wood, when their figures were perceived by the person they were approaching,

and laughing spirit had faded from his eye, and his voice no longer sounded like the echo of his joyous thoughts.

He had taken a hand of each, and for a moment led them in silence towards the turf seat he had quitted.

“Half an hour—ah, half that half, would have seen me leaving these shores for ever,” he said, drawing their hands together, and pressing them to his heart,—“how can it be, that I now see you here?”

“Because,” said the Abbess, who had more voice to speak than Juliet, “because we came hither to look for you; was it not here, Hubert, that I bade you come—and do you think I meant that none should meet you?”

“But none did meet me,” answered the young man, looking reproachfully at her.—“For weeks I have been lingering about in hope of seeing you, and long disbelieved the frightful tale that met me, Juliet, whenever I dared to ask for tidings of you.”

"What tale," said Juliet; "what folly have you listened to?"

They were the first words she had spoken, and he stood still, as if he feared to lose them.

"Folly, Juliet? there was more of horror than of folly in it. I was told, and with such detail of fact and circumstance, that doubting would have seemed madness—I was told that you had already taken a religious habit at Ancona!" the young man gazed at her, as if he rather doubted the evidence of what he now saw, than of what he had then heard.

"Hubert," said the Abbess gravely, "you have been to blame—did I not tell you, that Juliet should never be a nun?"

"Alas!" he replied, "my trust in you, which, when we parted, I believed should stand for ever, melted away before the feverish anxiety that consumed me, and left me so very very wretched, dearest Geraldine, that could you but guess what I have suffered, you would have no heart to blame."

“ This has fallen out most untowardly, my dear Hubert,” replied the Abbess, “ for I have risked more than I ever did before, to write to you, that you might know exactly how it stood with Juliet. But know you,” she continued, while the colour of her cheek varied as she spoke, “ know you, Hubert, if your father has received a letter from me, by the hand of an Italian lady ?”

“ Not when I left him.”

“ And when was that ?”

“ At least six weeks ago.”

“ Alas, Camilla !” exclaimed the Abbess, while tears started to her eyes, “ she must have perished, Juliet.”

The young Hubert asked an explanation of the grief his words had occasioned ; and when he had received it, entered, in reply, into a narrative of all he had heard and suffered respecting the share which the Abbess was reported to have taken, in the unfortunate nun’s escape. “ Will you not both pity me,” he continued, with some renewal of his wonted gaiety,

"when you recall the state of mind in which you found me? Juliet, I entirely believed, was lost to me for ever—and I returned to Torre Vecchia this day—partly, perhaps, to indulge the foolish weakness of once more recalling her image, upon the spot where I had so often seen it,—and partly, to make one last effort to ascertain your fate, dear Geraldine, before I returned to my poor father, the most ill-omened messenger that ever crossed his threshold, with my own heart broken by the load of grief I carried to him."

During this conversation, Juliet's eyes were fixed upon the speaker. They had reached the tree, and were all three seated upon the bank beneath it; Juliet was between them, and leaning her back against its stem, leaving her companions an opportunity of approaching each other to converse, which they did in a manner that enabled her to watch the countenances of both.

Hubert had scarcely uttered the last words, when she raised herself from her reclining pos-

ture, and taking a hand of each, exclaimed—
“ You have kept your secret long and well—so long, so well—that my heart has ached for it. I know you both were right, for *SHE* has *said it*.” And Juliet kissed the cheek of her aunt, to indicate who that she was, who never could be wrong. “ But as yet I cannot understand what danger could have betided either, had I long since known that Hubert was my cousin.”

Hubert imprinted innumerable kisses upon the hand that still clasped his, whilst Geraldine exclaimed, with a look of the most ineffable delight, “ And how do you know it now, my Juliet?”

“ Nay, rather ask me,” she replied, “ how it is possible I could have remained so long in doubt. I suppose I thought it sacrilege to look through any veil that you threw over me—but I never before had those two profiles so long before me, or I must have known it earlier. This is the reason, then, why you took my hand so strongly, Hubert, on the first day we met?”

Was it not instinct, aunt, and natural affection, that led me to forgive him so easily?"

"But, Juliet," said the Abbess, "your proofs for this, are slighter than it were wise to take upon a matter of importance. You fancy that our noses are alike, and for that reason you would hail this young man as your near relative. Think you by this, to raise his opinion of your discretion, which you have so often told me he must think lightly of?"

"For that," said Juliet, blushing deeply, "I must take my chance; but not even you, can ever make me doubt again, that Hubert is my cousin."

"Beloved Juliet," said the young man, dropping on his knees before her, "will you not bless, with me, the tie that, though you knew it not, first brought me near you."

"There may be some Father Dominic in the wood, watching his prostration, aunt; you had better not let him kneel so near you."

Though Hubert did not comprehend the allusion, he thought not at that moment of seeking

any interpretation of it; but resisting the effort of her little hand to raise him, he said:—

“You take me willingly, I see, for your kinsman, but this will not content me; tell me, tell me, dearest and best, may I hope to see this tie forgotten in one a thousand times more dear—Will Juliet d’Albano be the wife of Lord Hubert of Arlborough?”

“There may be some mystery in the matter yet,” said Juliet, turning from him, and hiding her blushing face upon the shoulder of her aunt.

“Has he a right, my aunt, to speak what now he has said,” she continued, “without leave asked of those who are far away?”

“And wherefore did I tear myself from you?” said Lord Hubert, “without daring even to breathe my name into your ear—without daring to claim the dear right of calling you my cousin, but because I would submit myself in duty to my noble father—Juliet I came here as his messenger to lead his affianced daughter to England.”

“And my father?” whispered Juliet.

"His pleasure has been cared for, my sweet cousin."

"All things went well for us in England," he continued, addressing himself now to Geraldine, but still kneeling at the feet of Juliet, and retaining her hand in his: "I come in triumph—yet but for this blessed meeting I should have returned in bitterest despair: all things go so well in England; the arrears are greater than my father thought them—my aunt's portion will exceed ten thousand pounds."

"That will make all things easy—but Hubert, has he removed the interdict? may you enter Albano——?"

"I tell you what, good people," said Juliet rising and speaking with affected peevishness—"excuse me, my good aunt, and you, my new found cousin—but if I am never to know any thing about you, but what my own sharp wit shall teach me, I give you notice that I shall leave you greatly to yourselves—I and Morgante will range the hills, and amuse ourselves with plucking such flowers as the season has left

us—while you both sit together, conferring on affairs too mighty for my capacity.”

“How well she knows her power, dear Geraldine ;” said Lord Hubert rising, and preventing the flight she threatened, by throwing his arm round her.

“We have no secrets now, my Juliet—at least from you, and to prove this—sit down and question me—exert your skill to ask me all that you most wish to know, and if I but pause, hesitate, or demur one single moment, to tell you what you ask, then banish me, and swear never to see me more.”

“It is a tempting challenge, cousin Hubert,” replied Juliet smiling.

“My Abbess, and my aunt,—may I accept it?”

“Most surely may you,” replied Geraldine, “and if he leave one doubt unsatisfied, I undertake to prompt him faithfully ; now then begin your catechism.”

Juliet re-seated herself between them, and in an accent of playful formality, but with

ously refuse to enter the
relative the Count d'Albar

Lord Hubert looked
Abbess, as if hesitating how

"You have begun with
dear child," said Geraldine
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"Perhaps not," said J
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Why you waited for hours,
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your name?"

"Were you to put one
time," said Lord Hubert
have a better chance of do

particular that the place of her residence could furnish, of a relative whose fate has long thrown a shade over our house. It would be difficult, Juliet, to make you conceive the deep interest which the memory of my unfortunate aunt has left among us—the remembrance of her—young, lovely, good, and gracious, as the day she left them, yet lives in the hearts of many—and even the young, who knew her not themselves, still make her history the theme of their saddest story, and most plaintive song.”

“How were her sufferings so well known among you?” inquired Juliet.

“The full answer to that question, my dear cousin, you shall receive when you are among us—the journal of her sad life, from the hour she left her native land, to the day before she died, is in the hands of my father. It is probable that it was never intended to meet the eyes of the family she had left. So gentle a being would hardly have prepared such misery for those she loved. It is the very transcript of her heart, and all its sorrows, and seldom has one so

young, so innocent, and so lovely, suffered as she did."

Juliet turned to her aunt, and saw that her eyes were swimming in tears.

"I am much to blame!" she exclaimed.—"To gratify my selfish curiosity, I am paining you."

"No, no; let him speak on, Juliet; I love to hear him," replied the Abbess. "That journal I have never read.—I knew she had written much; and when she was no more, my first care was to conceal her papers from the eyes of Isidore. I immediately made a packet of the whole, and gave it in charge to a woman I knew well at Torre Vecchia, with instructions to keep it carefully, till she should find an opportunity, among the many sailors of the place, to forward it to my uncle's address in England. This, it seems, she succeeded in doing, within a year after the death of my dear mother:—and it is this journal which has kept alive, in those who knew her, and awakened in those who did not, that tender interest which brought Hubert from Germany, to the spot on which she perished."

“I wonder not that he should feel such interest,” said Juliet; “yet still I do not fully understand why he lay waiting for me in the wood, being so determined to shun all intercourse with my father.”

“Your father’s feelings towards his mother, Juliet, as well as the devotion of my cousin Geraldine, formed by no means the least moving part of the history that journal gave us.—My father is warm in temper, and vehement in feeling. He charged me, as I valued his blessing, never to pass the threshold of the Count d’Albano; but to see you, Juliet, and, if possible, your little brother too, was part of my commission.”

“And was it also part of your commission to hide your name, and—and—”

“And ask you to become his wife, Juliet? Is not that what you would say?—Why, no.—I rather believe that in the last particular he went beyond the letter of his instructions.”

“As to the concealment of my name,” resumed Lord Hubert, “it was not only essential

to my safety in this country, (for this consideration alone would, perhaps, hardly have sufficed to enable me to resist your importunity,) but when I left my father, he granted the permission I asked, to seek an interview with my cousin Geraldine, on the condition that I pledged my word to him not to avow my name to any one in Italy, except herself, and to bind her, by all her love and duty to him, to preserve my secret. Nor was his precaution any way unreasonable. I was about to visit Germany, charged by our Queen to convey to her agent there a subsidy for the suffering Hugonots in France, which the policy of her cabinet would not permit them to transmit openly. To be identified as the doer of such an errand, in the state of the church, might have caused my career to end somewhat abruptly."

Juliet remained silent for a moment after he ceased speaking, and then turning to the Abbess, said, in an accent of reproach:—

"It was not to see me, then, that you came to Albano?—It was to meet Lord Hubert."

“You are right, Juliet; but you must settle the matter of precedence between you as you can. He certainly was my first object, but you speedily contrived to thrust yourself into his place; for the which injury, you must atone to him as well as you can.—And now, Juliet, I suppose you are tired of asking questions, or you might be tempted to inquire what that packet contained, which you saw Morgante deliver to Lord Hubert; and might also feel some curiosity to know wherefore our young cousin is returned.—Think you that the Queen has already sent another subsidy?”

The cheeks of Juliet glowed, and her heart beat strangely; but her eyes were fixed upon the ground, and she answered nothing.

“Juliet,” said the young man, again taking the hand that had escaped from his, “may your cousin Hubert claim the love that you vowed to guard for ever for the stranger? Does the knowledge of my name lessen the hopes I have lived upon?”

“How strange, how wild, must I have ap-

peared to you, my lord!" she replied, with painful emotion. "Good heavens!" she continued, "is it possible that the six short months which have elapsed since first we met beneath this tree, can have so completely changed me!"

"Changed you, Juliet!—Are you, then, changed, and has all the delight of the last hour been granted me, only to make me feel the misery of losing you more bitter?"

"Just now, Juliet," said the Abbess, rising, "you threatened to run away, and leave Hubert and me to settle our affairs together. This is not a bad plan, when a thorough understanding between two people is really necessary; and therefore I shall adopt it, advising you, before I go, to make your cousin clearly understand how much you are changed, and how much you are the same. My turn shall come next; for I, too, have some changes to communicate, of which, observe, he as yet knows nothing."

So saying, she walked back towards the wood; Lord Hubert thinking that her proposal was a

wise one, and Juliet being far too earnestly engaged in pulling to pieces the last honeysuckle of the year, to be able to prevent her.

There are secrets, which, in my opinion, ought to be held sacred even by the pen of the historian; and to recount every impassioned word, look, and action, of two lovers who had been separated under circumstances of so much doubt and dread, and were now re-united, with so much to license the full avowal of all their feelings, would be scarcely fair.

Thus much, however, may be recorded, without indiscretion. Lord Hubert assured her that he now came to ask her hand in marriage, with the full consent and approbation of his father. He told her, too, that he brought with him arguments, which his cousin Geraldine thought would prove extremely powerful towards convincing the Count d'Albano, that his wisest course would be to consent likewise. He did not very fully explain himself on the nature of these, but referred her to the Abbess for particulars. Altogether the interview was extremely

rel with them.

The heavy bell of the important hour of noon, seated side by side, bent but though Juliet rose, and hasten home, that her father pleased, by missing her it was no longer with the former days ; and in this else, the change to which proved not to be imaginary

Exactly at the point where the bridge crossed the stream, who had been indulging the rock, under whose shelter the history of her early

the bank together, and walked nearly in silence through the garden to the castle.

During their absence, the Count d'Albano too had met with an adventure, which had caused him a surprise, almost as agreeable as that which they had experienced, by meeting Lord Hubert, of Arlborough, in the wood.

It has been stated, that the Count retired to his library, for the purpose of meditating on the various ladies with whom he could be best pleased to commence life anew; and he had come to the point which left two balancing in his mind with a painful degree of equality, when the door of the room was opened, with that stealthy stillness which indicates a fear of intrusion in the party approaching; slowly and timidly it was pushed inward, sufficiently to admit to view the figure of a monk, completely enveloped in his cassock and his cowl. This dress was sufficient, at all times, to ensure a certain degree of welcome from the catholic Count d'Albano; on this occasion he testified neither surprise nor displeasure, but sat patiently

waiting for his visitor to declare the object of his coming. With a pace, which resembled the approach of a cat, infinitely more than the movement of any other creature, the timid monk continued to advance, and, when at the distance of about three feet, he dropped on his knees before the Count, and uttered, in a feeble whine, of most touching humility, "My lord and master ! my lord and master !"

The Count rose from his chair, and advancing his arms with an action very nearly involuntary, almost embraced the kneeling friar, exclaiming at the same time, "Father Laurence ! oh, Father Laurence !"

"My son ! my son !" was the touching rejoinder, "let not evil report send me from thee, my son. I am a weak, an erring, a deceived old man ; but doubt not the true devotion of thy faithful Confessor !"

While these words were spoken, the Count so far recovered his surprise, as to be conscious that some degree of resentment was necessary towards the man, who had unquestionably plotted against his holy sister ; but his memory was

neither active nor accurate in recalling the precise faults of which he had been guilty, and he remembered but too well all the suffering he had endured from the want of his ever-ready, and ever-soothing counsels.

“Nay, Father Laurence,” said the perplexed nobleman, “how is it that you have behaved thus—fie, fie, fie—my sister is my sister after all, and did you not know, Father Laurence, how much I wanted you—fie, fie, fie.”

“My noble patron,” sobbed forth the penitent monk, still on his knees before the Count’s chair, “you know not the temptations that beset me. I ever thought of your glory, beyond all else, and deemed that my duty was to shield you from the suspicion which such stories as I heard seemed likely to bring upon all your race. The mode of doing so, which appeared to me the most eligible, was, that your own confidential friend and Confessor, your own devoted Father Laurence, should appear against her; this was my motive, my son—my only motive—now drive me from you—if you have the heart to do it!”

As he spoke these heart-moving words, he leaned forward, and embraced the knees of his relenting patron.

“But the Abbess is here, Father Laurence; what will she say at seeing you return after what has passed?”

“Nothing, my beloved son. Nothing in the world will she say, if you think fit to admit me;—she may, it is likely, smile in her cold proud way; but is it the seventh Count d’Albano, who will banish his truest friend for fear of a woman’s smile? and do you not want me, my son? who is there to write your letters? who is there to spice your cordial? who is there to pray for you? who is there to bless you—and I will bless you, my dear son: drive me not from you—drive me not from you—at least do it not, till you have found one who can supply my place near you.”

“As for that, Father Laurence,” replied the Count, “Father Paolo is engaged to begin his residence here next Monday.”

“Now all the holy martyrs in heaven forbid!”

said the Confessor, rising from his knees with some difficulty, "why, my son, he will make a fable of every thing that is done and said in the castle, from the first hour he enters it. Oh! it is a false heart that Father Paolo's,—the saints in bliss forbid that I should ever live to see him in the place that I have filled within this noble castle. He will sneer and scoff, I know he will scoff."

"Scoff, Father Laurence? he dare not do it."

"Nay, my dear son, he knows your piety; he knows—none better than himself—that not even your valour will ever make you forget your reverence for things holy. His cowl will let him scorn you as he will."

"Scorn me, Father Laurence?"

"Forgive the word, my son. I know the man. Should he suspect that you are less wealthy than the Count of Marno, or the Duke of ——."

"How shall I rid me of him?" interrupted the Count passionately. "He shall not enter here, if I go unshriven to the day of doom."

“Speak but the word, my son,” said Father Laurence, approaching gently to the table, on which were placed all the implements of writing. “Let me but know it is your pleasure, and I will let him understand, and without an hour’s delay, that Father Laurence is in his former stall again, and means to hold it.”

“Then do it, in God’s name,” said the Count impatiently. “None such as he shall enter here, come what may.”

Without pausing for further instructions, Father Laurence immediately wrote and dispatched the following epistle:—

“HOLY AND WELL-BELOVED BROTHER,

“The evil accidents which, for many days, prevented my return from Rome, have yielded at length to my earnest prayers; and power has been granted me to reach once more the spot, where, for so long a period, I have been appointed to exercise my holy calling—the Virgin Mother—the holy angels—the saints—the martyrs, all have heard my prayers, and

granted my desire. I am again restored to my beloved patron, and to my duties near him. It is by his order that I now write this notice to you, holy brother, in order that, knowing the situation to be no longer vacant, you may proceed no farther in your preparations for taking the part of domestic Confessor in the Castle d'Albano. Health and godliness be with you, and farewell."

As soon as the letter was finished, Father Laurence read it aloud to the Count, whose only remark upon it was:—

"Well, well—let it go—any thing is better than living in the way I have done, since you left me. Let it go."

In less than three minutes afterwards the letter was advancing at a hand gallop towards the convent of Santa Croce, safely lodged in the pouch of Riccardo. As soon as he had seen it fairly on horseback, the Confessor returned to his patron, and instantly set about making the blessing of his return perceptible, by the per-

formance of sundry little offices, which he knew must have been missed during his absence. He opened, shook, and dusted the huge roll of the Albano pedigree, sighing very audibly, as he removed the cobwebs that marked the neglect into which it had fallen. Then he approached, with gentle step, to the deep bergere, which had the honour of sustaining the person of the Count, and drawing away the cushion that supported his back, he set to thumping and shaking it, till he had made it as plump and smooth-looking as his own benign countenance—softly dropping it behind his patron when he had finished the operation, with the gingerly caution of a child playing at spillikins. He next turned to examine the stand near the door, which was wont to contain a constant supply of holy water; and again a deep sigh heaved his bosom—it was empty. Judiciously refraining from any remark which might tend to wound his patron, without increasing the happy consciousness of his own return, the Confessor silently took the vase from its stand, and leaving the room for a

few minutes, returned with it replenished; then approaching the Count, with a mingled air of reverence and affection, he sprinkled his dress, his table, his chair, and his foot-stool. It was very evident that the object of all this zealous care was fully sensible of it, and exceedingly well pleased to see himself once more attended to as he ought to be; yet still there were some slight symptoms of anxiety in his manner.

“But the Abbess, Father Laurence; what shall we say to her? You surely must have some reasons to offer for what has happened.”

“Reasons, my son? Never doubt it. My reasons are such as the Pope himself could hardly refuse to receive. What did I, but listen to the instructions of one of my own order, who was placed in a situation of high authority? Would you have had me give the Abbot of St. Andrea’s the lie? Trouble not yourself for this, my son; I fear not the holy lady’s resentment.”

“But at dinner, holy Father?—It wants not

many minutes of noon—what is your plan? How shall you present yourself?”

“Even in my old place, my son; and when they hear me bless the meat, they will hardly quarrel with it for my sake.”

Almost as he spoke, the great bell sounded the hour of dinner; the priest and his noble penitent walked side by side into the hall, and had already been some minutes in their places, when the Abbess and Juliet entered.

Conscious of being late, they approached the table with more haste than usual, and were sliding with all celerity into their places, without looking round to see who were, or who were not, at the board, when the deep full voice of Father Laurence pronounced aloud the Latin grace, with which for so many years he had been used to consecrate all viands eaten in the castle of Albano. Both ladies started at the sound; and by common consent first looked towards the Confessor, and then at each other. There was something in the sly conscious look of Father

Laurence, which produced in both a most indecorous inclination to laugh; and when their eyes met, not all their indignation against him could prevent their suffering this inclination to appear. It is probable that the pompous Count would have preferred almost any other indication of their feelings; and they both knew him so well, that they read aright the heightened colour which it produced. More, therefore, for the purpose of treating the business in the manner least displeasing to him, than from feeling any thing beyond the most profound contempt for his favourite, the Abbess assumed an air of stately displeasure towards him, which she, however, softened, greatly to her brother's satisfaction, upon his mumbling some apology for having been so grossly deceived.

The increased importance which Juliet had of late acquired in the mind of her father,—first from his having considered her as his heiress; and, secondly, from the pains she had taken to show him how he might prevent her being so,—induced him to address some slight words of

apology to her, after dinner was ended, concerning the easy pardon he had accorded to his favourite.

"You, my dear Juliet," said he, "will, I feel certain, agree with me, not only in the justice of forgiving an error, which proceeded only from mistake; but in the immense importance, at this moment, of recalling near me the only man existing perfectly competent to understand my wishes and their motives; and, therefore, the only one capable of filling the place of secretary to me."

Juliet assured him, and very truly, that the satisfaction of seeing him again attended by a person whose services were so acceptable to him, greatly overbalanced any feeling of anger to which the conduct of Father Laurence might have given rise.

"God grant, my dearest father," she continued, "that he may be as efficiently useful to you as formerly; and that the interesting letter it will soon, I hope, be his office to write, may receive such an answer as we desire."

“Amen! Lady Juliet—Amen!” replied the Count fervently. “But it is not only in the writing the letter of which you speak, that I shall require his services. Father Laurence is a shrewd man, Juliet; he knows as much, or more, perhaps, of all the noble families for twenty miles round than any other. He will tell you their rent-roll and their pedigree in a manner that would surprise you. He is, in truth, a very able man, and one whom, spite of the accident which has happened, I greatly value.”

“Have you decided, my dear father, to whom you will do the honour of offering your name and rank?”

The Count did not answer immediately, and looked so exceedingly solemn, that Juliet feared her question had been abrupt.

“Forgive me, my dear sir,” she added; “if my importunity is troublesome; but I most earnestly wish that I could hear of this affair, which I have so much at heart, being in a good train before I again leave you. I think not

that my aunt can remain much longer at Albano."

"I suppose not—I suppose not, Juliet. Yet do not fear that I should leave you in suspense; you have sufficiently proved to me that your anxiety for the continuance of your noble race, is such as deserves the most respectful attention from the head of it; and, young as you are, an express shall wait upon you at Sant' Catherina's, as soon as possible after this important business is definitively settled."

"Respecting Sant' Catherina's, my dear father," replied Juliet, colouring deeply, "I believe my aunt would wish to converse with you. I know that at present she is engaged in her own room, by a letter that she is anxious to finish; but if you could conveniently afford her half an hour, I think she would be glad to be admitted to you."

"Is it respecting your renewed vocation, lady Juliet? Surely, neither my sister, nor yourself, can doubt my perfect willingness to accede to your pious wish in this matter?"

“My aunt, dear sir,” replied Juliet, considerably embarrassed, “will herself explain, much better than I can do, the reasons for her wishing to consult you. May I,” she continued, rising to leave the room, “may I inform her, sir, that you will see her alone in your library?”

The Count d’Albano took no peculiar pleasure in tête-à-tête conversations with the Abbess of Sant’ Catherina’s; but he saw no mode of avoiding that which was now proposed to him. He was, moreover, in a state much nearer approaching to good-humour than usual, and therefore replied, with a very tolerable attempt at graciousness, that he should be very happy to see her.

Juliet hastened immediately to her aunt.—
“You come in good time, my dear child; I have this moment finished my letter to my poor nuns; but I will not dispatch it, till every thing shall be satisfactorily settled with your father. Do not look so anxious, dearest Juliet; though our path may not be perfectly smooth before us, I see no obstacle beyond our powers to remove. What is it you fear, dearest?”

"Not the final result," replied Juliet; "I know, full well, that you have wherewithal to remove greater obstacles than any I foresee; but I cannot help feeling great anxiety for the manner in which my father shall receive Lord Hubert's offer to visit him. So much strong averseness must have been conquered for my sake, before this offer of a visit could have been made, that if it be not graciously accepted——"

"Fear nothing, Juliet; Lord Hubert shall sup with us to-night, and your father shall receive him as you would wish. That he shall conceive as strong a friendship for him as I have done—or even as that which you feel yourself,—I will not undertake to promise, but he shall be welcomed as a noble and well-esteemed cousin—will that content you?"

"Completely!" replied Juliet. "Manage but this for me, and it shall be long ere you complain of my looking anxious again."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Bell, book, and candle, shall not drive me back,
When gold and silver beck me to come on.

SHAKSPEARE.

WHEN lady Geraldine entered her brother's library, she found Father Laurence sitting beside him, listening, with the most unshrinking patience, to the recapitulation of all he had before heard, on the subject of his patron's intended espousals, at the time that lady Claudia di Montecielo was the object of his vows.

Geraldine paused at the door. "You are, perhaps, engaged on business, my lord?" said she. "If so, let me know when you are at leisure, and I will return."

“By no means, by no means, sister Geraldine, shall your business yield to mine. It is true we are speaking of business of as high, or perhaps I may be permitted to say, of higher importance than any other; nevertheless, it shall be postponed. Leave us, holy Father,” he continued, turning to Father Laurence; “weigh well what I have said to you, and when the holy Abbess leaves me, I will again summon you to my councils.”

The monk bowed profoundly to the noble brother and sister, and left the room with no lingering step.

In the age of which I write, very important events might occur, and be canvassed in many circles at Rome, which might fade away and be forgotten before they could travel into the provinces; or if they reached them at all, it was so laggingly as to present, perhaps, a stronger contrast between past and present times, than can be found in any other circumstance. Thus it happened, that no syllable respecting the frightful disclosure of the crime of Isidore, which, though

it took place within the walls of the Inquisition, had been spoken of with very little reserve by the friends of the Abbess of Sant' Catherina's at Rome, had yet reached the Count d'Albano.

There were many feelings which prevented either lady Geraldine or her niece from touching on this dreadful topic, in writing or conversing with him; but there were now many powerful reasons for informing him of what had been so unexpectedly discovered; and though shrinking from the task she had to perform, Geraldine was herself determined to acquaint her brother with the whole. In doing this, she cautiously avoided dwelling upon any point that might awaken her tenderer feelings. It was not in the presence of the Count, that she could find consolation in weeping over the memory of her mother. She made the dreadful narrative as short as possible, and her courage sustained her through it without a tear.

The Count listened to her, certainly not without emotion; but it was rather that of terror than of sorrow. So fearfully distorted was his

mind on the subject of his mother, that it seemed as if not even the evidence of her murder could inspire him with any human feeling respecting her; nor was it till his sister had repeated the expression of horror and indignation used against Isidore, by one whose words appeared to the Count as little differing from the voice of Heaven, that he uttered—

“It was a dreadful crime.”

“It was a crime so dreadful,” said his sister, “that the land wherein it has been committed, has become hateful to me—I will abide in it no longer.”

“What do you mean, sister Geraldine?” said the astonished Count:—“Is it your purpose to change your convent? And will all your interest at Rome, think you, obtain for you another appointment equal to that you would abandon?”

“I have no such object,—no such wish, my lord; I have laboured for many years to be an instrument of good towards those whom I was appointed to govern; but I have endured too much to continue in a station of so much fatigue

and responsibility; and when I leave it, I trust that it will be held by one, whose spirit has not been wounded as mine has been."

"And Juliet, sister Geraldine? What is to become of her? Of course you know that it is by her own earnest wish she is now to return to the cloister?"

"I think, brother, you have in some degree misunderstood my niece. It has been, and is, her generous, and most earnest desire to see you married again. You can hardly wish for a male heir more sincerely than Juliet wishes to see you the father of one. But it follows not from this, that she should pass her days in a cloister."

The Count's eye-brows rose to the top of his forehead, and he coloured highly.

"It seems, then, that I have not only misunderstood her, but that both she and you, holy mother, have most strangely misunderstood me. Have I not told you—but perhaps I have not—but the truth—but the truth is, sister Geraldine, that unless Juliet be provided for in the manner

your generosity proposed at the time she entered your convent, I shall not have the means of forming this marriage, which she professes so ardently to desire."

"She does more than profess, brother; she does desire it; and is now about to give a proof of her sincerity, that I think you will feel to be strong indeed. Juliet is not ignorant that your expenses have exceeded your means, and it is her first wish to relieve the embarrassments which have ensued from this."

"And how can she do this, sister Geraldine? How can she, in the name of all the saints, help in the slightest degree to do this, except by becoming a nun in a convent where no pension is required with her?"

"I am well aware, my dear brother, that it must appear to you impossible for poor Juliet to possess any such power; but if I should make it appear to you that she really has it, or at least that all which is wanting to her possessing it, is your consent to her accompanying me in my voluntary exile, instead of remaining to

enter an Italian convent; if this be proved to you, Theodore, would you refuse your consent to her doing so?"

"I know not what you mean, sister Geraldine; but of this I am quite sure, that Juliet may travel with you to Jerusalem without finding the means of redeeming the rich farm that I mortgaged last year to the Prior of Santa Croce, or even of paying the tailor for the suits of my serving men, or the saddler for the caparisons of their horses."

"It is natural that you should think so, Theodore, but nevertheless it is possible that you may be mistaken."

"Explain yourself, in the name of Heaven, sister; in truth, I like not these riddles."

"I will explain every thing to you, Theodore;—but it is surely not unreasonable, that before Juliet should pledge herself to make the noble sacrifice she meditates, she should receive your assurance, that in return you will give her permission to dispose of herself as she likes—provided always, that it be in such a manner as

I—to whose care you have already consigned her—shall approve.”

“Nor shall I scruple to comply with such a condition. Juliet is a discreet young woman; she has wisdom beyond her years, and has already proved herself to have so just a sense of the honour and advantage of her family, that I have little reason to fear she should do aught that would offend me.”

“Your confidence in her is no more than she merits, brother. The case is this. Our maternal grandfather received a grant, some forty years ago, or more, from Henry the Eighth of England, of the rich abbey lands of Emersby. It was one of the endowments, which, in his anger at the resistance of those who enjoyed them, he caused to be forfeited: for several years the revenues of these lands were enjoyed by Lord Arlborough; but on the death of King Henry, and during the reign of his daughter Mary, his right to them was disputed by the former occupants, his steward and tenants were thrust out, the monks of Emersby were again collected

within the shelter of its abbey, and again enjoyed the revenue of its lands. Our grandfather, however, still retained the grant made out to him by the order of King Henry; and after Queen Elizabeth came to the throne, she not only confirmed it, but took effectual measures to have it carried into effect.

“This, however, was not achieved without some difficulty. The present Queen, they say, loves not, like her imperious father, to enforce her will by the bared right hand of power.—It is her pleasure to work by the law, and with the law, and many years have been consumed in adjusting the claims of the different parties. The whole question has recently been decided in favour of our uncle, and a very large sum of arrears has been awarded to him.—With that generous liberality, which I hear has ever been a remarkable feature in his character, he immediately declared, that he considered the descendants of his sister, as having a right to share in the large sum thus recovered; but on applying to an eminent lawyer on the subject, and

requiring his professional services for the purposes of dividing and conveying it, he was told, that this idea of a right on the part of his sister's children was altogether unfounded, and that her portion, paid at the time of her marriage, cleared the family property of all claim from her. Yet, still our generous uncle was not satisfied, but determined to bestow, as a free gift, one half of the sum thus recovered, upon myself and your daughter Juliet, in equal portions."

To the whole of this discourse, the Count d'Albano listened with extreme attention, which appeared to call almost painfully upon his powers of hearing and comprehending; but at the last words, the whole truth seemed to rush upon him at once, and he exclaimed:—

"An heiress! an heiress in her own right?—she wishes to relieve me? may the virgin queen of heaven bless her for it;—she is indeed a good and pious child, and worthy of her father's noble name,—but sister—sister Geraldine, let me understand you fully. Is it Juliet's filial purpose to endow me with her wealth?"

The epithets of "selfish," "unnatural," passed through the mind of Geraldine; but she spoke them not, even with her eyes, and answered his eager question by saying:—

"Such is her purpose, Theodore; and all she asks in return, is freedom to follow me whithersoever I may go."

"Assuredly! beyond all question. What think you may be the amount? It is a blessed chance. Surely Juliet shall go with you, sister, and I cannot doubt your generous care of her. This will make a difference; lady Cordelia is scarcely young enough. By your leave, sister, I must seek my Confessor—Yet, stay; how did these tidings reach you?—may they, in truth, be trusted?"

"Doubt it not; I pledge my word on the accuracy of what I have now told you. But you inquire for the messenger; and it is, indeed, of him I wish to speak. I trust, brother, that you will receive him nobly, seeing that he is no other than Lord Hubert, of Arlborough, the only son of our benefactor, and near of kin to our blood;

—he awaits your pleasure at Torre Vecchia.”

There was an awkward sort of twitching, either at the seat of pride, or the seat of conscience, within the Count, at hearing this; but he was far from feeling a moment's doubt as to the course he should pursue.

“I will send instantly to Torre Vecchia to invite him, sister Geraldine; nay, I would willingly go myself; but perhaps his reception will be more becoming his dignity, as well as my own, if I remain within my paternal halls to welcome him. What think you, sister Geraldine?”

“I am decidedly of your opinion, my Lord. Let my niece's little page, Morgante, bear your message to him; and I doubt not he will come hither immediately.”

The Count instantly summoned the boy to his presence, and in the same breath desired that the lady Juliet also might attend him. The command reached them together. Juliet was in the very act of telling her petted page, that the

green and silver hunter had again made his appearance in the wood.

This conversation was put a stop to, much to the mortification of Morgante, who was dying to ask five hundred questions, and before all others, whether the lady Abbess was with her when she met him; but not even this could be pronounced, as the servant who brought the message remained within hearing, till they reached the door of the library.

As soon as they entered it, the Count exclaimed:—

“ My dear lady Juliet, all this is very extraordinary; but be assured you have my permission to please yourself in every way. Noble generosity, indeed, in your uncle, and not less so in yourself, my dear;—noble, indeed. I want you, if you have no objection, my dear Juliet, to send your page as a messenger to Torre Vecchia; but not if you wish to employ him elsewhere. In this, as in all things else, I would have you exactly follow your own wishes. Your aunt will explain to you, my dear, how anxious

I am that you should be your own mistress in all things."

Juliet, who knew not exactly to how great an extent her aunt had specified that her wishes for freedom might lead her, cast down her eyes, and said nothing.

"Shall your page go, my dear, to carry this invitation for us to your cousin?"

"Certainly, sir; and be sure he will deliver your message faithfully."

"Then go, boy," said the animated Count, addressing Morgante; "go to the town of Torre Vecchia, and inquire for Lord ——"

"Not so, brother," said Geraldine, interrupting him. "Let him inquire at the Golden Fleece for a young man called Signor Fratoni; and to him it is that your message must be delivered."

The Count then charged the boy with a long string of compliments, and a vast deal about honour and happiness, all ending in the announcement, that the company of Signor Fratoni was immediately requested at Albano.

Morgante listened to the long message so

attentively, that it was evident he intended to remember every word of it; nevertheless his quick eye shot a glance, every now and then, to the face of his young mistress, wherein he hoped to read an explanation of sundry intricate fancies which had taken possession of his imagination. But all he could clearly make out was, that lady Juliet certainly took as lively an interest in the message, as if Signor Fratoni and the hunter in green and silver, were one and the same person. On this point, however, his page-like curiosity would be speedily satisfied.

“And so she has told her father, now!—But it matters not,” thought Morgante, as he set off on his mission;—“and, after all, it is not much more strange than her taking a holy Abbess with her, to meet her lover in the wood. My lady Juliet is the sweetest lady ever born in Italy; but for the management of her love affairs, she has, in truth, some unaccountable fancies.”

The distance was soon passed, and Morgante entered the ever open door of the Golden Fleece, with an air of great importance, desiring to know

“ But your message, Morgante ? What says my lord the Count ? ”

The page then delivered, very faithfully, the ceremonious courtesies of his master, and Lord Hubert listened to them with rather more attention than their bearer thought they deserved ; he then added, in a manner that showed he considered it as the most important part of his embassy—

“ But lady Juliet said in my ear, as I was passing out, ‘ Say to him, *immediately.* ’ ”

“ I will return with you, boy,” replied the young man, evidently feeling the full value of Juliet’s addition ; “ you shall have to wait but a moment.”

They accordingly returned to the little inn together, and Lord Hubert entered his chamber to seek a packet of papers, sent by his father, to be delivered to the Count d’Albano, in case the negociation with which he was charged, should reach a favourable termination.

“ Now then, sir page,” said he, gaily, as he returned to him, “ I am ready.”

Lord Hubert laughed good-humouredly, and replied :—

“ Even so, Morgante.”

“ Signor Fratoni,” repeated the boy, “ my lord the Count——.”

The aspect of Lord Hubert was instantly changed, the smile departed from his lips, and in an accent of much haughtiness, he interrupted him with—

“ Well, sir, what of the Count ?”

Morgante had been too long spoiled to be easily daunted, and instead of proceeding with his message, he said, after deliberately examining the countenance of his old acquaintance :

“ Their cousin ?—you may well be the cousin of our saintly Abbess, for you have just her sort of look, but I should never have guessed that our yellow little Count was of kin to you.”

Lord Hubert’s good humour returned, and in a tone more like what the boy had been accustomed to from him, he said :—

ceremonious courtesies of
Hubert listened to them with
attention than their bearer thought
he then added, in a manner
considered it as the most important
embassy—

“ But lady Juliet said
passing out, ‘ Say to him, I

“ I will return with you
young man, evidently feeling
Juliet’s addition; “ you shall see
moment.”

They accordingly returned
together, and Lord Hubert
to seek a packet of papers
to be delivered to the Countess

“Will Signor Fratoni be pleased to take the high road? or will he prefer the shortest path over the cliffs?”

“The shortest path decidedly, Morgante,” replied the young man, smiling at the roguish emphasis with which the boy pronounced his borrowed name.

The young envoy led him up a path that greatly resembled a flight of steps hewn in the rock, and then by a short cut across the high ground on which stood the watch-tower, through the belt of oaks and chestnuts which sheltered the noble esplanade that fronted the castle. The most remarkable circumstance of the conversation that passed between them on the road, was the prodigious number of times that the page contrived to pronounce the name of Signor Fratoni.

“You seem to have learned my name very perfectly, Morgante;—from whence did you hear it?”

“From my lord the Count, Signor Fratoni. It was so long before I could find out that you

had any name at all, that it is quite a pleasure to me to speak it, Signor Fratoni, now that I know it so well, Signor Fratoni."

"Did lady Juliet tell you that was my name, Morgante?"

"No, Signor Fratoni—and I think it may be, that she will tell me, ere long, that I do not pronounce it properly, Signor Fratoni."

"Very likely, boy—and when she does, you may learn to pronounce it better—but not till then."

On reaching the castle, Lord Hubert was ushered, with much ceremony, and through an ostentatious display of domestics, to the parlour of the ladies, where he found the lord of the castle, with his sister and daughter, waiting his arrival. The Count was pompous, swelling, and nervous, but most overwhelmingly courteous in the welcome with which he received him. The beautiful countenance of lady Geraldine expressed satisfaction, yet it was blended with traces of emotion, to which many painful recollections had given birth; but Juliet seemed to

live only for the present moment, and her glowing cheek, her bright but conscious eye, and the trembling yet delighted agitation of her whole manner, spoke with most eloquent truth, the happiness she felt at seeing her lover welcomed to her father's mansion. Yet there was a moment when the haughty glance of Lord Hubert's eye, directed towards her father, made her tremble for the termination of a visit, upon which all the hopes of her future life depended; but her lover turned towards her, and read the look of imploring gentleness, with which she seemed to beg for his forbearance:—every feeling, except those of love and hope, was forgotten; and his changed manner spoke more forcibly than any words could have done, the joy he felt at the favourable issue of Geraldine's negotiation.

The evening passed, as Juliet thought, most delightfully; but, certainly, not without some feeling of embarrassment to the rest of the party. Little allusion was made by any one to family connexions and reminiscences, but the Count

ceremonial of the receipt
permitted his kinsman to walk
in the gardens and grove
castle, without deeming it
pany them. He made
when the family rose from
for being obliged to repay
Father Laurence, having b
them, of no ordinary impor
him.

Thus left to themselves
pily away.—There was c
pleasure to Juliet, in findi
seated beside her lover
tree ; while the sweet enjoy
unchecked either by terro

mid-day meal, the lovers enjoyed, without restraint, the contemplation of the happy prospects before them. But in the afternoon Geraldine joined them, and called their attention to the necessity of announcing to the Count, the proposal of Lord Arlborough for a union of their children. Geraldine knew her brother too well, to fear that, under the present circumstances, he would oppose it; and Lord Hubert declared, half in earnest, half in jest, that he would carry Juliet off by force, if it proved otherwise.

“No, Hubert, no,” exclaimed Juliet; “no force, nor fraud either, dearest cousin. You cannot tell,—it is quite impossible that you should ever know the comfort, the delight, the unspeakable enjoyment of having no discovery to fear, and then,” she continued, looking away from them both, “I have another feeling that you cannot share—I wish most ardently to leave my father happy. If I can do so—no shadow of regret—nor any sting of conscience, will poison the dear years that lie before me.”

“Fear not, dearest,” said her aunt, embrac-

rangement of all we desired
posed a second marriage to
have been difficult, in spite
arrears, to convince my brother
rying an Italian nobleman
necessary for his well-being
nothing, Juliet, all will go

Before supper, that same
dine again requested an inter-
ther. His Confessor was
rose to depart as she entered

“Come in, lady Geraldine,”
the Count, in his most courteous
have nothing to do just now
wait the result. I shall be
amine with you the documents

conveyance of one-fourth part of the sum to Juliet, was the ostensible business for which Geraldine had sought this interview, though certainly, in her estimation, not the most important. She held the parchments in her hand, and the Count eyed them with a good deal of nervous impatience. There were several distinct memoranda, besides the deed of gift, and lady Geraldine untied the string that united them, while she led the conversation to the subject of Juliet's renouncement of the wealth thus vested in her.

"It is certainly a great sacrifice, Theodore, and as you have placed her in my hands, I should feel that I should be hardly right in permitting it, were it not that from the same generous relation, whence this noble present comes, a proposal has been made for her, which, if it be accepted, will place her in a station too exalted to make even this large sum of any real consequence."

"Of what proposal do you speak, sister Geraldine?" said the Count, again regarding the

ing rather to his looks than to the parchment contains the arrears of the rents of E. copy of the judgment by was awarded to the Earl of

The Count stretched and received them.

"The proposal I mentioned the Abbess, "was of marriage from the only noble uncle, to my niece, "

"He is a heretic," said his brows. "It is impossible

"This document," replied towards him another piece conveyance of a fourth part

“ More, sister, more; Juliet has passed her seventeenth birth-day. But what is it you say of a marriage? It is certain that he is rich and noble,—but pray, Geraldine, is this the wish of Juliet?”

“ It is, Theodore.”

“ I thought she was wedded to the cloister.—Why, then, did she propose a second marriage to me? I thought she was determined to be a nun?”

“ You do not appear, dear Theodore, to understand the feelings and motives of Juliet. She knew that, being a female, she could not continue to her country the noble line of Albano, although she might inherit your lands—this was her reason for desiring that you should contract another marriage, and wish retiring for ever from the world.”

“ I had thought otherwise—quite otherwise. Let her marry, then, some Italian nobleman—.”

“ And her dower, brother?”

The Count's olive face became scarlet.

“ Surely, surely, sister Geraldine, Juliet has

such was now her dilemma
case, my lord, she must not
in the manner she now wished
veil, she must of course enter
she enters, with a property

“The holy Virgin guide
Count; “this seems to be
and complicated difficulty
Confessor, sister Geraldine
wait for my answer, till I have

“Most certainly; but as
remain here long, I will be
informing me of the result.

“You shall hear it within
these parchments with me
may better judge the question
things relating to it.”

and will go to my own apartment, as I would wish to avoid seeing Lord Hubert till I know your pleasure. He is a noble youth, but something proud and hasty; till you have decided to reject his generous offer, I would not have him know that you could waver on it."

"The holy Virgin guide me!" repeated the Count, "and it is Father Laurence must tell me, what her will may be."

His sister left him, as his Confessor appeared.

"Here is a strange business come upon us, holy Father!" said the Count, as the monk entered, "and it is you must put me in the right path; it is you must tell me, on which side my strongest duty lies."

"Of a certainty will I, my beloved son," replied the Confessor, "why else am I here?"

"Tell me then," he continued, "with all the sincerity of true and holy confession, what it is that disturbs your noble mind."

The Count d'Albano had already communicated to his friend Father Laurence, the intelligence he had received the day before from the

tane relatives. But he no
order that he might be r
stood, to recapitulate ev
action, and make Fath
comprehend, before he
not only the safety of l
his own possession of on
years' arrears of the ren
abbey lands of Emersby, c
that should be given,

The monk heard him
earnest watchfulness of
the dreamy indifference, w
listened to the long speec
when he had concluded, he

“ This case, my son, is

usual clearness, as I listen to you. Did nothing depend upon the question, but the simple alternative of your daughter, lady Juliet, being given in marriage to a heretic, on the one hand, and your forfeiting the possession of a sum of money, on the other, I scruple not to say, that it would be your bounden duty, as a catholic father, to abandon the world's wealth, and avoid perilling the precious safety of your child. But in truth, my son, this is not the question. If for the sake of avoiding a possible danger to lady Juliet (and we have no right to say that she has not strength to resist it), but if, to avoid the danger of shaking her belief, you renounce, at this critical juncture, the wealth that is placed within your reach, may you not thereby lose the blessed hope of raising up a defender of the true faith, in the dear and precious person of an eighth Count d'Albano? Think well of this, my beloved son, before you scorn the means, which it seems to me that providence has put into your hands, at the very moment that it was most needful to you; think well of it, and

may the blessing of the church follow your decision !”

“ Then you think it is my duty, as a pious catholic, to give my consent to this marriage, holy father ?”

“ I do, my son, unless indeed the holy Abbess of Sant’ Catherina’s would think fit to oppose it.”

“ There is no danger of that, Father Laurence. It is quite plain to me, that the match is of her making. Who could have put it into the heads of these rich tramontanes but herself ?”

Father Laurence saw no use whatever in recurring to the scene that had recently passed in the judgment-hall of the Inquisition ; it could only puzzle the cause ; but he had not forgotten the youth in green and silver, who had been there spoken of ; nor the declaration of lady Juliet, that the youth was her affianced husband. There was no use in talking of all this, but he doubted not that this hunter and the cousin were one and the same person, and he thought to

himself, that it might have been lady Juliet's eyes, which put the notion of such a marriage into the head and heart of the young heir of Arlborough.

"However that may be, my dear son," replied the monk, "it will render your duty,—for in this light only can we regard your unwilling consent to this marriage,—it will render your duty much less painful, when you consider that a person who stands so pre-eminently high in the estimation of our holy Father the Pope, approves this sacrifice of inclination to the interest of your country and of our holy religion. Not only must the approbation of the Abbess of Sant' Catherina's confirm your judgment and remove all your doubts, but it will, beyond all question, remove also the doubts of every other person, should any thing like doubt arise on the subject."

"That is true, Father Laurence; I feel the strength of your arguments; and I will have twelve candles burnt before the shrine of St. Theodore, for having restored to me, at this

have prayed for wisdom, the noblest of patrons, and the through the mazy paths of world; and sometimes, my that, perhaps, I have not p

Not all the pride of the C prevent his being deeply words. He laid his hand shoulder of his friend, and r

“I believe it, Father Lau

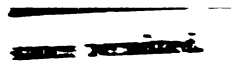
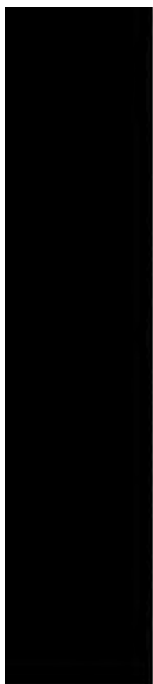
When the emotion pro scene had subsided, the Co fessor to inform the Abbess happy to see her, and they p rence to seek a deputy for

of Sant' Catherina's,—and the Count to the placid contentment which arose from knowing that his Confessor was ready to honour him as a saint, for doing that which would make him the very happiest man in the world.

It is unnecessary to describe minutely the interview which followed between the Count and his sister. The objects and wishes of both parties are too well known to the reader to leave him in doubt as to its amicable termination.

Nothing could exceed the happiness of Juliet, when she learned that, from being a wealthy heiress, she had again become portionless; except it were the delight with which Lord Hubert heard the assurance, that no further obstacle existed to his wishes, and that he might make the arrangements for conveying the aunt and niece to England, with all the celerity he chose.

It will be readily believed that he was not slow in acting upon this permission. The vessel which had brought him direct from London to the little harbour of Torre Vecchia, lay waiting



CHAPTER XL.

The storm is up, and all is on the hazard.

SHAKSPEARE.

WHILE this was going forward, the Abbess prepared to dispatch a trusty messenger to Ancona, with the unexpected resignation of her high office, and her last farewell to her nuns. The former was a mere formal document, addressed to the new Abbot of Sant' Andrea's, in his capacity of visitor to her convent; for it was a part of his duty, as such, to answer the resignation, and to appoint a time for the election of a new Abbess.

Her letter to the nuns was as follows:—

*“Geraldine d’Albano to the Community of Sant
Catherina’s di Siena, near Ancona.*

“MY BELOVED CHILDREN,

“WHEN I tell you that these lines are to bid you farewell, I have no need to add, that they are written with a tearful eye, and a reluctant hand; neither can it be necessary to assure you, that nothing but the consciousness of feelings too powerful to be overcome, and which must prevent my ever being to you again what I have been, could induce me to leave you. My dear and excellent friend, the Abbess of St. Ildefonse, conveyed to you the welcome news—for such I well know it was—of my acquittal from the charges brought against me before the holy Inquisition. Nothing could be more gratifying to me, than the manner in which this acquittal was pronounced; but it could not heal the wound, which the condemnation of sister Camilla had inflicted on my heart. I believed that con-

demnation to be unjust; yet I had no power to save her. It is for this that I leave you. It is because I will not hold a station that, with all power to rule, gives none to protect those committed to my care. I have said that I believed the condemnation of Camilla to be unjust; but I had then no proof to offer that it was so, save her own word.

“I believed that word, although no other did—and in justice to her memory among you, I must state, that in Rome I heard that which fully confirmed her statement.

“Camilla was a wedded wife when she was placed by force within the cloister. She never took the vows—but her refusal to do so, was either unheard, or unheeded, by those around her. So much I say in justice to the Countess di Mondello, for such is her rank. What her ultimate fate has been, I know not; but I fear, I greatly fear, she must have fallen into the power of the late Abbot of St. Andrea; for had not her escape been intercepted, I see not how it could have become known to him. He would not spare

ren, to communicate to you
her account—you will show

“It is, then, this frightful
determined me to leave you
tant land, more peace of
than I could ever again
holding the exalted station

“Farewell, my dear friend
of all men preserve and bless

“At whatever distance,
may pass her latter days,
life, you will never be without
the prayers of

“GERA

To the Abbess of St. I

which induced lady Juliet and Francesco Garroni to undertake their important journey to Rome; and it was he who prevailed on the venerable Abbess of St. Ildefonse to set forth on the same long pilgrimage.

The effect they produced upon the trial has been already shown; and the letter from Geraldine, which assured the good old man, that she believed her safety to be greatly owing to his exertions in her behalf, was little less gratifying to him, than the nomination to his splendid Abbey.

During the interval thus occupied, the Count had dispatched another offer of marriage; and whether it were that he had taken Juliet's hint, and chosen the object of his vows more discreetly, or that the improved statement he was able to make, of his pecuniary intentions in her favour, occasioned the different result, it might be difficult to decide; perhaps both causes had their share in producing the result, which was, a gracious acceptance on behalf of the lady, from her brother the Marquis of Calatonio. The joy

which the success occasioned to the Count, spread itself, like oil, over the entire household; and a fire but wore a smile of satisfaction or of joy—even Olive forgot her wrath, and consented once more to confess her sins to Father Lawrence. Juliet's heart bounded with pleasure as she contemplated all the happiness she had occasioned, and when she opened the casket of trinkets, that had been purchased for the ungrateful lady Claudia, and witnessed the gratification of her father as he examined them, she was no gaily happy to afford a single sigh to the recollection of the heart-broken youth who had wooed her, as she enfolded them in soft wool for their journey.

Margaret, was the only one of all the household, that either lady Geraldine or her niece felt desirous of taking with them to England. Juliet, probably from not liking her personal attendant, was less helpless and dependent upon the services of a waiting-maid, than most young ladies of condition; and the simplicity of a conventual mistress had set lady Geraldine almost

wholly free from such thralldom; so that they both agreed in preferring to trust themselves to the handmaids of merry England, than to increase the difficulties of the long voyage, by adding any timid females to their train.

Nothing could so effectually have removed every shadow of regret from the mind of Juliet upon leaving her father for ever, as the hilarity of spirits which rendered it impossible for him to conceal his perfect contentment at her departure.

The only trace of sorrow produced by the approaching separation, might be seen on the countenance of Father Laurence, as he gazed wishfully on the laughing face of Morgante. A suspicious person might perhaps have been led to think, that there must have been some tie, stronger than the regard of a ghostly father, to cause the heavy sigh with which he uttered, "And so, Morgante, I must never see thee more, boy!"

Old Marietta, indeed, who happened to be within hearing when he uttered some such ex-

passion, made a shrewd remark to one of the men who stood near her :—

“ Might one not say, Riccardo, that the holy Confessor loves that boy as well as if he were the natural father of him ? ”

But it must be remembered, that in no one age of the church have there been wanting persons ever ready to launch such unmerited taunts as this against its professors. The day fixed for the departure of the noble party arrived; every thing that the ingenuity of Lord Hubert could suggest to make the voyage comfortable, was already on board; and escorted by the Count and his Confessor, they set off from Albano. After a ride entirely occupied by the repetition of the hopes and wishes of those who were to go, and those who were to stay, for the future happiness of each other, they arrived at Torre Vecchia, and the voyagers were speedily conveyed aboard.

It was about four o'clock in the afternoon that the anchor of the good ship *Enterprise* was raised, and with a skilful hand at the helm, which

gave such of her sails as were unfurled, enough of the breeze to take her clear from among the shipping that surrounded her, she slowly and steadily wore her way beyond them. During the time occupied by this manœuvre, our party stood at the stern, gazing on the slowly receding objects they had left, and waving a last adieu to those they were never to see again; but when it was completed, they were requested to seat themselves where the bustle occasioned by getting under full sail, would not annoy them. Accordingly, lady Geraldine, for we must no longer call her the Abbess, placed herself with her two young cousins beside her, on a bench that was pointed out to them, and gave herself up, with an intensity of pleasure her past life had seldom permitted her to indulge, to the exhilarating beauty of the scene. The clear autumnal sky, the bright blue waves of the Venetian Gulf, and the favouring breeze, before which they bounded over it, were all enjoyed by her, with the freshness of young and unexhausted feeling. Her companions were in the situation

which, perhaps, internal objects i
towards them,
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both of whom had for many days exercised their utmost skill to render their cabin as comfortable as possible. Morgante had long before climbed, and clambered, and sung himself into a state of excessive weariness, and he was already fast asleep in the berth assigned him near that of Lord Hubert. But Juliet and her aunt sat down together on the small couch that was screwed to the floor of the cabin, before they prepared to creep into their tiny beds. The wind was so moderate, and so favourable, that they felt no inconvenience from the movement of the ship; and never had any fellow-voyagers more pleasurable subjects to discuss. Every thing before them was bright with hope, novelty, and happiness; nor was there in the heart of either a single feeling of regret for aught they had left behind.

Juliet had so long known, that her father's design was to part from her; that leaving him, as she did, surrounded with all he wished, it would have been worse than folly to have felt or fancied a sorrow upon his account; and they

5
happy in the very summer
morning just with a sick
as flowering; and they
found they ever could see
the and sky which were
signs for ever varying,
must be known and studied
of their increasing beauty
continued.

Every successive hour of
that wanders across the he
bright and fiery, or how
forms a new picture, and
The weather, too, was e
best enable them to taste it

to anticipate the scenes they were going to, that their delightful voyage would too soon be over.

They had continued for rather more than a month on board, with weather of almost unvarying serenity, and a wind that seemed only to change as they wished it, bringing them in that period within a day's sail of the coast of Cornwall, when they, at length, acknowledged to each other, that their hearts were beginning to outrun the wind, and that they should hail the voice that told them England was in sight. The captain declared, that it was likely enough that this news might greet them when they left their cabins on the morrow; and this assurance, while it raised their spirits to the exact pitch for enjoying every thing around them, made them eager to taste all the pleasures of their last evening upon the lovely ocean. Accordingly, they once more placed themselves upon their favourite seat, and watched the indescribable glory of the sun, as he went down amid a world of gold and crimson;

nature furnishes no object comparable to this. From the first moment that the slanting ray is caught by the wavy surface of the sea, to the last broken gleam that remains upon it, a ceaseless succession of brightness and of beauty meets the eye, during a brilliant sunset on the ocean. Every change appears to bring fresh offerings to its awful majesty, and splendour upon splendour rolls on before us, till the imagination is lost and confounded in the unspeakable grandeur of the scene.

Our party remained almost immoveable, as they watched the gorgeous pageant fade away; nor did they leave their places till Lord Hubert remarked, that Juliet drew her mantle closer round her, as if sensible of the chilliness of the evening air.

"I must not let your health suffer at your first approach to our misty island, Juliet," said he, rising; "or you will call it, as those of your sunny clime too often do, the region of aches and rheums."

"Fear it not, cousin," she replied; "that

mist must be dark indeed, that shall make me deem England less fair, or at any rate less dear, than Italy."

"I think so too, Juliet," said lady Geraldine; "and yet I will not deny that there is a shrewd keenness in the air to-night, that will make the shelter of our little cabin feel agreeable."

As they turned to reach the stairs which led to it, they remarked the captain standing on the side of the vessel, opposite the place where they had been sitting, with his eyes earnestly bent towards the east. They naturally looked in the same direction, but could discern nothing, except a small black speck a little above the horizon, which might have almost been mistaken for a bird.

"What are you looking at, captain?" said Lord Hubert, stepping towards him.

"I was looking at that small cloud, my lord," he replied; "we shall have wind, I think, before the morning."

“but if we lower sail, and
we have nothing to fear.
as soon as yet.”

These words, though t
cient to create fear, awak
interest in the approach o
Gondoline proposed that
themselves in the large cl
bert's case had provided
watch the heavens for an
retired to rest. Juliet c
proposal; and, in a few
again seated in their form
such a manner, as ever
thought would secure the

all of them somewhat alarmed, at perceiving the great change which a few minutes had made in the aspect of the heavens.

The whole eastern hemisphere was already nearly covered with dark and heavy masses of clouds, sailing rapidly along, while working up against the wind, the same vapours, which half an hour before had glowed around the sun in treacherous splendour, now came, with a lurid remnant of their crimson colouring, to meet, and, as it should seem, give battle to these driving squadrons of black giants, which appeared rushing towards them from the east.

There is something sinister and alarming, even to an inexperienced ear, in the strange whistle that passes through the shrouds, before the wind is fully up. The sea, too, seems to work, and heave silently, without apparent cause, while the dark clouds above twist and curl themselves together, in shapes that threaten mischief. All this was seen, and darkly felt, by Geraldine and Juliet; but when for an instant they withdrew their eyes from the heavens, their alarm

became infinitely stronger, as they remarked the unusual activity of the men, many of whom were half hid among the flapping sails, which they were labouring to secure, before the storm burst over them. Deeper yet was their consciousness of approaching danger, as they marked the pale cheek of Lord Hubert. Even in the gloom of the fast closing darkness, the feeling expressed by his countenance was perceptible.

"You fear for us, Hubert," said lady Geraldine, gravely.

"Think what a precious freight is borne by this frail vessel, dearest Geraldine ! But I believe her to be perfectly sea-worthy ; our captain I know well, for an experienced and skilful navigator ; and, in short, I think my dislike to all this bustle is more in proportion to my love for you both, than to any idea of danger I may conceive from it."

Juliet spoke not a word, but there was something approaching to sublime, in the deep and quiet expression of her eye, as it turned from the sea to the heavens, and ran over the dark

harmony of that leaden hue which pervaded each. The very intensity of her fears seemed to give firmness to her spirit. Her own life, and the lives of the only beings she loved on earth, were threatened—but if they should perish, it would be together—none would be left to mourn; and, with this gloomy consolation, she braced her mind to meet all that should come upon them. Geraldine looked at her pale face and full dark eyes, now raised to the heavens, and then again seeming to search for the still hidden terrors of the sea, till her own fortitude sank, and melted away before the thought of the danger which was so surely approaching.

“Here it comes!” coolly observed a seaman, who was employed in securing some ropes at the side of the vessel, near which our party were stationed.

His words made them all look in the direction to which he turned; and though, in their ignorance, they read not the signs, which met their eyes, as distinctly as he did, they felt that he

spoke true, and that the enemy they dreaded was upon them.

The air, which, though day-light had faded with unusual rapidity, still remained clear, and free from fog or mist, now looked, at the apparent distance of a few hundred yards, like a palpable wall of utter darkness, moving onward, and threatening to overwhelm them in impenetrable night. The sea became suddenly agitated, and the vessel pitched violently, but still without their being conscious of any wind. This lasted but one moment, in the next they were gasping for power to breathe, in the fearful whirlwind that enveloped them. Lord Hubert, who sat between his cousins, threw an arm round each; and, without this support, they could not have retained their position, so violent was the motion of the ship, and the action of the wind that drove against them. At this moment, and with no preparation from slight flashes, a sudden stream of lightning shot across the heavens, that seemed to blast the sight; and, ere they were

conscious it was gone, the thunder burst above their heads, with that fearful cracking sound which speaks concussion near us.—“ Oh God ! have mercy !” exclaimed Juliet ; but even Hubert heard her not ; the sea had already reached that pitch of fury which forbids any noise but its own to be listened to ; and the next instant a mighty wave broke over the vessel, and drenched them in its heavy brine.

“ Below !” roared the captain, in a voice that in the interval which occurred between the bursting of one wave and the collection of the next, was audible through the tempest :—“ Below with the women !—this is no night for them.” But no seaman was at leisure to obey him. The storm had risen so rapidly, and the previous weather had led them to display so much canvas, that every man was straining to prepare the vessel for the struggle she had to undergo ; and as the captain addressed himself to no one in particular, no one left the urgent work which engaged him, to attend to the trembling females. But it was indeed necessary that they should

retire; already drenched to the skin, and suffering from the dreadful sickness which few, save thorough-bred seamen, can withstand in such weather, they both made an effort to rise, but they found it was quite impossible for Lord Hubert to conduct them together; the tremendous pitching of the vessel, the wet and slippery deck, and the rude wind that battled and buffeted with them, at every step they took, soon convinced all three of the futility of the attempt. Geraldine disengaged her arm, and staggered back to the seat they had left. To make herself heard was out of the question, but Lord Hubert understood her, and hurried forward with the drooping and passive Juliet, whose terrors were for the moment lost sight of in that exceeding misery of bodily suffering, which makes us, at such moments, almost hope, rather than fear to perish. Yet even in this state, her kind heart reminded her of Morgante, who as usual had worried himself by his incessant gambols, and retired to bed, while the rest of the party were still engaged in watching the brilliant congrega-

tion of clouds that were so soon to change their treacherous aspect of beauty into one of terror. With the assistance of Lord Hubert, she crawled to the berth where he lay, and equally to her surprise and satisfaction, found him in so profound a sleep, that the rude rocking, by which he was thrown from side to side in his well-secured tenement, disturbed him no more, than the gentle movement of a mother's knee disturbs her infant. "Happy child!" murmured Juliet, as she crept on to her own cabin, "when shall I sleep like you?"

Lord Hubert now bitterly lamented that he had suffered his cousins to undertake the voyage without female attendance; though it is more than probable that whatever number of women they might have brought with them, would have been just so many more sources of sorrow and suffering, during the hours that their services were the most wanted. This inevitable truth, however, was very naturally lost sight of by the young nobleman, when he laid poor Juliet on her bed, and was obliged to leave her helpless,

sition than Juliet; but he
more at leisure to taste,
the horrors of the scene.

Before Lord Hubert returned
had struck the main-mast,
top to bottom. Fortunately
fire, but the ropes were torn
tered, presenting, as the
made the desolation visible to
of hopeless ruin, that seemed
able destruction. When he
rose without saying a word
guidance, till he had placed
and trembling Juliet.

It would be worse than
through the weary hours of

might be called, was derived from his visits to their cabin. To him these visits would have been less painful, had it not been so difficult to answer the languishing inquiries of the poor sufferers, without adding to their miserable and too well-founded terrors. The vessel still obeyed the helm, but there appeared little hope that she could long continue to do so. Spar after spar had given way, and the jury-mast, by which they had supplied the one destroyed by lightning, bent before the blast like a reed.

Hitherto the wind had blown from a quarter which enabled the captain to keep the labouring vessel off the dangerous coast of Cornwall; but he knew they were so near it, that should the tempest change its direction, they had every thing to fear from the probability of being driven upon the rocks. Three of the sailors knew this as well as himself, but the rest of the crew were Portuguese and Italians, little acquainted with the perilous navigation of the British Channel.

Neither to these men, nor to his suffering

times looking out eagerly that he was watching for so that the wind would fa

Lord Hubert, though by their exact position, so studying the anxious face some danger threatened, g was already upon them.

"Are there breakers a-h said he, with that forced c more strength of nerve, mind.

"Not rightly a-head, n captain: "and as long as the westward, we are safe;

the wind such as to drive us upon the coast of Cornwall?"

"Not if it blow as it did five minutes ago, Lord Hubert. But do you not see—Luff! luff!" he cried, running hastily toward the helm, and laying his own powerful hand on the tiller, at which two of his best men were placed.

Lord Hubert had followed him, but saw it was no time for questions.

For a moment captain Jones kept his station at the helm, and then exclaimed:—

"By G—d she minds it no more than if I drew her with a silken thread. Let down the boat!" he cried, while his voice vainly struggled with the bellowing wind to make itself heard by the men. He seconded the words by an action of the hand, and the helmsman stepped forward to repeat the order, and assist in the execution of it. Jones still kept his hand idly upon the helm; but his eyes followed the men who were engaged in preparing the boat. Again he tried the rudder, and again the ship missed stays.

"All then is over?" said Lord Hubert, in the

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towards the heavens, and the black depths more hideous still, that yawn between them, may conceive the feelings of Lord Hubert as he prepared to place the women he loved in the small boat that was to be lowered into the raging sea. But he had a brave English heart within him, which reproached him for one short moment's contemplation of his own misery—"God's will be done!" said he, and stedfast to perform his task, he hastened below, to summon those he loved so truly, to instant danger, and perhaps to death. He would have answered their eager questions, by a somewhat mitigated account of the scene which awaited them—but the delusive kindness did not succeed, even for an instant—the momentary hesitation, the averted eye, the trembling lips, were at once understood with terrible distinctness.

Lady Geraldine silently threw her arms round Juliet, and pressed her lips on her pale forehead:—

"Now I am ready, Hubert," she said, prepar-

... the ...
... the ... with ...
... the ...
... the ...
... the ...
... the ...

... that I ...
... the ...
... the ...
... the ...

When they all reached
that the ... was already
... of the ... and the
... within her, with
... to the
... of containing :

Captain Jones explained to Lord Hubert, that he was waiting to approach the shore as nearly as might be done without striking, in order to shorten as much as possible the distance between them and the landing that he hoped to reach.

The ship was now driving before the wind at a tremendous rate, and through the spray and mist which enveloped them, they caught occasional glimpses of the land.

"That is England then !" thought Geraldine, but she sought not to communicate the bitter feeling that this suggested, to her companions. She still held the hand of Juliet, who was placed between herself and Lord Hubert ; and all three clung to the side of the vessel to which the boat was suspended.

"We are very near, sir !" said an English sailor, who stood close to the captain.

"I know it, Marshal," replied captain Jones, — "but how many minutes could the boat live in this?"

Still they drove onward.

"If she strikes, captain," said the same man,

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Die Bewegung in Europa

cries of the captain for dispatch, made no further resistance, but hurried onward to the place where the crew were already lowering the heavy boat.

Lord Hubert sprang into her, in order to receive Geraldine in his arms as she descended:—

“Now!” he exclaimed, “now, Geraldine!” she lost not a moment, but threw herself after him. He placed her securely in the bottom of the boat, and then prepared himself again to mount the ship’s side. At that instant the vessel struck against a rock, and the concussion was so violent as to make him quit his hold, and fall backwards amongst his terrified companions. The vessel in her rebound, seemed to draw the water with her, from the hideous mass that reared its dark strength to destroy them—one moment more, and she must strike again. Two amongst those already in the boat saw the inevitable grave which gaped to receive them, and in an instant severed the ropes that held her to the ship; as they did so, a lad, who had attached himself greatly to Morgante during the voyage,

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struck,—and the fearful sound of water rushing into her hold was plainly heard. Captain Jones rushed to the mast, by which poor Juliet still held, but her grasp was become feeble, for the sea, which broke again and again over her, had drenched and chilled her limbs. He took her in his arms, and with all the care the dreadful moment permitted, bound her firmly to a large plank that lay upon the deck, then throwing off his shoes and jacket, he stood beside her, waiting till his ship should sink beneath him. Nor had he long to wait,—a gurgling sucking sound showed that the time was come, and in another moment the raging waves received them. Most of the men who were left on board, had seized on some loose spar, which helped them for a while to float upon the foaming surf. But many groaned forth their last breath, unheeded, amid the fearful uproar of that hour.

Captain Jones had fastened the end of the rope with which he had secured Juliet, round his arms, and swimming with no common

[illegible]

was he alone who suffered, for Juliet was no longer conscious either of pain or danger.

They were now sufficiently near the shore for many to see their perilous condition; yet still too distant for any aid to reach them. Many people on the cliffs had seen the vessel go down, and watched the floating specks around her, knowing them to be the wretched victims of the wreck, yet totally unable to assist them, for no boat could have lived for a moment in the raging surf that rolled and roared between them, and the objects of their vain pity.

Either from the accidental impulse of a wave, or from some other cause, captain Jones was immediately and widely separated from the object of his care.

Juliet was borne onward, sometimes darkly visible to those who watched her from the shore, towards which she was rapidly borne by the strong current of the tide, and already her long dark hair was distinguished, floating like a mass of sea-weed upon the water.

“It is a woman, by heaven!” exclaimed a

...without some
our own heart's ease—
...in the love of God

Without waiting for
ascended the cliff, fell
himself, and having
all her power for a mo-
ment could be taken
himself, who was already
there, to be seen from the
street, at the very high on
that reached around again
that no heart could be in
safety at the surf through
but the artistic woman, I
had prepared to trust him

ropes were quickly furnished from the neighbouring cabins, and carefully fastened round him, while the other ends were secured in the strong grasp of his companions.

More than one female came forth from the shelter of her hut to watch his bold enterprise, and their shrill voices were heard above the blast, as they one and all begged him to desist from an undertaking threatening so much danger to himself, and promising so little chance of aid to the object of his generous compassion. But every moment added to his eager wish to make the trial, for every moment brought the figure of Juliet nearer to his sight. Cheered by the men, warned by the women, and almost deafened by the roaring surge near which he stood, the brave young man sprang forward, and, for many moments, baffled the force which drove him backward, with equal energy of mind and limb. But it was all in vain. Man may do much in leading nature to perform his will; but he must work with, and not against her power. Again and again, the little progress which the

him to save himself, by
overwhelming surge that
he was, however,
completely exhausted, as
whose attention was now
being him to shelter, a
and situation.

At the distance of half
at fishermen's cabins, no
one attempt had been in
which would have made a
the boat, than the point
not been that the sand be
as to render it a very labor
to see, that had been laid

trived to find wherewithal to exist, by watching, with her little boy, for the crabs that were brought into this creek by the tide. It was to this spot that the insensible body of Juliet was borne. The last wave on which she floated ran far up into the creek, and rushed back, leaving an end of the plank, to which she was attached, bedded firmly in the sand. The tide was already at its height, and not even the blustering gale, which still continued, could prevent the necessitous widow from creeping out a few moments after it had turned, to seek for the fish, on the sale of which her livelihood depended. A boy of ten years old followed her, and, before they had advanced three paces from their hut, they both perceived the body of Juliet, now lying entirely out of the water. A scream of horror burst from both.

“She be dead, mother! she be dead!” exclaimed the boy, as he ran towards her; “dead and cold, sure enough!” he continued, kneeling down beside her, and touching her face.

The woman knelt down too, and looked at her

one in all the scenes
which shipwreck brings:
were comparatively dead:
time to utter a command,
her chain for a knife, w
cut the cords that bound
her in her arms, an
A pent fire glowed upon
dimmed her bay to beg
the village pastor, she stri
from her, and wrapping h
she passed, laid her be
her chest and limbs with
was almost immediately r
visions of returning life
was, and so irregular an

rouse and sustain this strength; and her only hope for this most needful succour rested on the message she had dispatched by her boy.

But much before any relief from that quarter could possibly reach her, a party of those who had remained at the look-out upon the cliff, and from thence watched all that had occurred in front of widow Martin's cabin, arrived there, and as more than one among them was furnished with a flask of liquor, the kind widow was enabled to try the remedy which not only herself, but the whole of the experienced village of Penlynn, considered as the most efficacious that could be applied, nor were they disappointed in its effects. Juliet swallowed the cordial; her eyes opened for a moment, and the strong shiver that ran through her limbs showed returning life, though accompanied with suffering.

“What hands! what a skin!” exclaimed the widow, as she gazed with admiration at the object of her charitable care; “she is a lady, if ever there was one born. I wish, Jack

as we, to pass our word
perhaps if Mistress N
much, it may lead th
God is witness, I have
an one as this in."

"And that's a truth
man she addressed; "
before you could think
spare the liquor; trust
thing this side heaven c

CHAPTER XLI.

One whose heart is buttoned up with steel.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE more perfect poor Juliet's restoration to life became, the more evident were the indications of approaching fever; the shiverings were strong and frequent; and, excepting that once, when she opened her eyes, she looked round her as if seeking for those she had lost, she gave those about her no reason to believe, that she was conscious of any thing that was passing.

Before Jack Nichols returned from his embassy, Jem Martin had happily accomplished that on which he had been previously dispatched. He not only presented his mother with a little

ever was intoxicating, mus-
son in the condition of he
to make Juliet swallow a
new supply, but was stop
had succeeded in doing s
the minister. We have
describe this worthy divi
that is necessary that th
of him may be comprised
he was a perfect sample o
the reformed clergy of t
thousand good qualities, b
hung so heavily about l
always capable of acting
tates of his heart, or even
suffered fearful persecutio

Pope, that he considered any feeling which approached to religious toleration, as treason against his sovereign, and every doubt of Queen Elizabeth being the first of earthly potentates, as impiety to Heaven.

As he entered the cabin, the group that still crowded around Juliet separated, to permit his approach, and he knelt down beside her, examining her pulse, and watching her painful respiration, with all the attentive earnestness of pastoral charity.

"She is too delicate—far too delicate," said he, shaking his head, as he looked at her, "to stand firmly against so rude a shock."

"Aye, that is it, your reverence," said widow Martin; "she is a true lady, as I say, your reverence; and where shall I find a place fit for her, poor soul, if she is long sick after her drowning?"

"The charge must not fall upon you, widow," replied the good minister. "God forbid that I should forget my first duty at such a moment as this; if she were as coarse and homely, as she

Not one of those who
cabin, but raised their
praise at the generous cha
minister; but the good
inquiring of the widow M
upon the person of the sl
article that might lead t
rank or connexions.

"I was in too bad
reverence," replied the
tore her wet rags away fr
what they were like, or w
but there they lies, if yo
out any thing by looking

One or two women,
brought from the village

dressed according to their station, that the wearer was a person of distinction.

"Poor lady! she has not been used to hardship, that is easily read," said the kind-hearted minister.

"And here, your reverence," rejoined the widow Martin; "here is a pretty thing she had tied about her neck with a velvet ribbon. I made free to cut the string, for it was twisted in such a fashion, that I thought it might hurt her."

As she said this, she put into the hands of the clergyman, a large locket, splendidly set in diamonds. He immediately perceived its value; and his compassion for the beautiful owner was increased by feeling the terrible contrast of her present situation with the wealth and luxury to which she had probably been accustomed. The thickness of the locket induced him to suppose that it contained some trinket or memorial beneath its brilliant surface; and pressing it in different parts to find the hidden spring, it suddenly opened and discovered a gem dazzling in bright-

the finest diamonds. Had
who lay stretched on the floor
revolting from deformity
been branded by any mark
most clearly have announced
in the helpless condition that
reduced, the pastor of Penlyn
it his duty to help and comfort
sight of this glittering spectacle
he abhorred, his very soul
The look of tender pity,
ardent admiration, with which
regarded her, was changed
and of scorn. He hid the
his sight, by hastily closing

for one of my profession, scandal and crime. I cannot do it; nor should more be done by any, than may suffice to save her life. Nay, I know not, if even so much may not be sin. Which of us shall say that the dreadful hurricane that has wrecked the ship, was not raised by His breath, to keep the hated pestilence from our recovered land? She did not come alone.—Think not that the tempest has raged in vain.—The ways of God are not always inscrutable to his true servants; and I hear in the howling blast that is yet abroad, a voice that says; ‘For you, my people, have I done this!’—And shall I labour to undo it? When I so receive the mercy of Heaven, may it be turned into wrath against me!”

Having said these words with vehement and most sincere earnestness, he prepared to leave the hut. The widow Martin, who, in common with all the parish, did her best to hate as her pastor hated, and to think and believe on all points, exactly as he thought and believed, gradually ceased, as he spoke, the assiduous

young sister Anna, hastily

"For the love of
tell me what I am to do
reverence's will, that I
I found her? Why should
all the parish, and bring
me, because I went into
scale?"

The corner of her apron
her eyes, gave indication
then accosted her.

"I have no warrant to
woman," replied the man.
and, perhaps, it was so
now, whose meaning, not
representation of his real c

“ You have done no evil, good woman ; for we walk not in darkness as steadily as in the light ; fear not that you have done evil ; nor need you fear,” he continued, casting a reluctant glance towards Juliet, “ that you shall be burdened long with one who it is the will of God should perish. I think not that yon pale idolator can live through the night ; should it prove otherwise—what I have given you, will obtain her a bed to lie on, at the Anchor. The trade of a publican forbids all distinctions. Tim Franklin must take her in.”

He once more turned towards the door of the cabin ; but as he was about to pass it, he was again stopped ; for on the threshold he encountered the goodly person of Mistress Margaret, who had graciously condescended to grant the request of the widow Martin, conveyed to her by Jack Nichols, and was come to see the drowned woman, and ascertain whether or not she was a proper object to recommend to the charitable notice of Mr. Justice Oldham and his lady. The waiting-woman stood respectfully

one is sure to meet you
of body is she, your reve

“The body is most f
the minister; “but,” sh
fully, “she is one of t
our duty to eschew, even
conversion; the wretche
Mistress Margaret.”

“A papist, your reve
charitable functionary, s
lecting her clothes closely
to come in contact with s
a blessing it is, I did no
down with me! You l
how fond she is of seei
strange; but mercy on n

her eyes had found their way into the cottage before her, and expressed a considerable degree of curiosity to examine further. "You had better not enter—you can do no good—and his worship would not think the better of you for seeing her, nor of me for letting you do it. So turn back, Mistress Margaret, and tell your lady, that I have already done what is needful."

It is possible that Mistress Margaret might have preferred reporting the result of her own personal investigation; but to express any such wish, after what the minister had said, was quite out of the question: so taking leave of widow Martin, by a slight nod, and—"I wish you well rid of her, good woman," she turned her steps back again the way she came.

Our poor Juliet, meanwhile, lay perfectly unconscious of what was passing round her; she was not insensible, but a strong fever had already seized upon her; her head ached intolerably, and there was a general confusion in her sensations which left her no other distinct conscious-

popular man amongst the
life : but they had crept
minister had proceeded to
respecting her, and poor
herself left with her unwel
crone, who still stood sile

“ What on earth am
Dawkins,” exclaimed she
the door behind him ; “
am I to do with her ?—tr
nued, looking at her hand
the silver, “ here is a ma
and a goodly sum it is for
my hand,—but I don’t se
help me ; how am I to

hand of Juliet :—" Poor soul ! her hand burns like a coal of fire. Go and ask, since it is the minister's will, go and ask if Tim can send to fetch her, and I will bide the while and watch her."

Relieved by the suggestion, the poor woman wrapped her cloak about her, and hastened to obey it, while the person she had left to watch Juliet, drew near to her, with feelings widely different from those evinced by all who had left her. Her first act was to kneel upon the floor, and pick up the unfortunate trinket, which poor Juliet's reverence for the memory of a mother she never knew, had induced her to retain constantly in her bosom, though her mind had long ceased to cling to it as an object of religious observance. The old woman had either narrowly watched the manner in which the minister had opened it, or she had been previously familiar with some similar contrivance, for she now caused it to unclothe without difficulty, and having gazed upon it for a moment, she placed it on a stool which stood near, and turning towards it on her

“ Mary! blessed
my weary soul in
vow! Spurn me from
your son spit upon
me forth, and the
upon me, if I do not
tect this blessed lad
must be, or the Virgin
have borne her up u
the arm of my bold
her! Blessed she is, a

Then closing the ca
care was to disentang
had been suspended;
her neck, the poor wide
had cut it in more than
no longer capable of be

the small housewifery treasures of the poor widow, and passing it through the jewelled ring of the locket, she again secured it around the neck of the unconscious Juliet.

Having performed this office, which she considered as infinitely more important towards assuring the welfare of the patient, than all else that could be done for her, she employed herself in examining the clothes which had been torn off her, to ascertain if any thing were left that might form a garment more befitting her to wear than any she or her neighbours could be able to furnish; and the old woman had just convinced herself that by a little ingenuity much might be done with the fragments, when the widow Martin returned from her visit to the landlord of the Anchor.

"He won't hear a word of it, not he," she exclaimed, as she entered; "no papist nor dying woman shall darken his doors. So says Tim Franklin; and he holds to it, though I offered him more than half the money the

“and I have no one to sh
let your Jean here, wh
when he is wanted, if you
over to the station yond
the fishermen that he m
mother Dawkins wants
to me; and if you wi
they shall carry her to
do the best I can for h
heretic.”

The last word was no
reach the ears of the wido
enough to remember wha
who uttered it as the bitte
powers that be. Now, n

secret, and when none but each other could hear it.

Though mother Dawkins had the reputation among some of her neighbours of being a witch and a sorceress, the widow hesitated not to accept her friendly offer. Jem was again dispatched, and speedily returned with two stout Cornish men, who placing considerable faith in the good or ill will of mother Dawkins towards them and their boats, had obeyed her summons, as she predicted, at a moment's warning.

"Now then," said the old woman, "let us do our best to move her easy, poor soul. You must lend us the rug too, widow Martin, and 'tis by that they must carry her."

"And who will pay me for another, if this is torn, as 'tis like enough to be—but take it, take it—there's no help for it, I know."

Juliet had sunk into a sort of heavy slumber, and hardly opened her eyes when the women approached to arrange the blanket round her. All that the extreme poverty of the poor widow could enable her to supply, was freely lent, to



sciousness, which disclosed to her the whole wretchedness of her most forlorn condition. That she became at length fully aware of all her misery, and yet lived to bear it, proved that her constitution was as strong to endure, as her mind was susceptible of feeling suffering. Yet even amidst all the desolation of her bereaved condition, she had still much kindness to be thankful for.—The brave young man, who had so dauntlessly, though in vain, hazarded his life in the hope of preserving her, was as zealous in promoting her recovery, and contributing to her comfort—if the best that could be done for her, under such circumstances, could deserve the name—as his pious aunt, who had a vow in heaven to bind her to it.

For three long weeks Juliet languished through all the suffering stages of a violent fever, and, during that time, the young Cuthbert saved one half of his daily earnings to enable him to assist his aunt in providing what their simple skill thought best for her. The old woman was an excellent nurse ; and it was as much to her



she remembered that she had seen them leave the ship in a boat, which, though far from secure, was at least infinitely more so than the means by which she had herself been saved, she felt that there was still a hope that she should recover them. As her strength increased, she related all these particulars to Cuthbert, and he promised to make such inquiries along the coast as should speedily confirm her hopes, or show that they must be abandoned for ever.

Of the six long weeks which Juliet passed in this miserable hovel, the one during which Cuthbert was absent upon this inquiry, was incomparably the most wretched. His stay was greatly lengthened by having followed a wrong direction at setting out; and so many wrecks had been thrown upon the coast during the late storm, that it was not easy to particularize the one, to which his inquiries referred.

At length, however, he not only succeeded in discovering the quarter from whom intelligence respecting the friends of Juliet might be ob-

he to communicate them to
had been absent upon this
days; and, by his own a
forth, it was not likely to
three at the very furthest.
drooped on the fourth day,
ness of delayed hope, and
fifth, with the hourly incre
cipated despair, was, on th
sixth, which was the period
seated at the door of the hu
woe. A high-backed stuffe
every old woman in Penly
for many a year the pride an
Dawkins, was now appropri
It had been drawn by the

cheer too the pale girl, who looked, and perhaps felt, as if she regretted the grave she had seen so near her.

In this chair Juliet was seated; the red Cornish cloak, of historical renown, wrapped round her, her long dark hair hanging neglected upon her shoulders, and her heavy eyes fixed in mournful meditation upon the sea, when Cuthbert suddenly appeared before her, having descended from the cliff by a path immediately behind the cabin.

It is impossible, by the slow drawling medium of words, to convey any idea of the electric touch which Juliet felt through every fibre of her frame, as she caught the first bright glance of Cuthbert's eye. The moment he saw her, he took off his hat, and waved it over his head. It was well for Juliet's impatience, that his look and action were such as must have spoken of joy, to every nation of the earth; for Cuthbert's English was not very intelligible to Juliet, and it often required a multitude of questions, and much



The old woman and her nephew stood by with silent reverence, as she performed this act of gratitude, and both crossed themselves with a feeling of the truest sympathy.

"Show me a heretic that will do as much," said the old woman, as she assisted Juliet to rise, "'tis a pleasure and a blessing to serve one of the true faith, but before you ask a question, or hear a word, pretty one, you must take a sip of my comforting tincture."

Juliet seated herself without speaking, but the sweet and grateful smile with which she took the offered refreshment, made itself perfectly understood by her kind nurse.

Cuthbert then proceeded to narrate his adventures; his frequent disappointments, and his almost abandoned hopes, were recounted at greater length, than it is necessary to repeat; and the substance of that part of his story, which restored Juliet, amidst want and penury, to health, strength, and joy unspeakable, may be given in a few words.

Such a boat as Juliet had described to him,

There was a gentleman
appeared very ill, but he
the neighbourhood, and ha
with the woman and a little
for several days. During
active inquiries had been
respecting the wreck; but
according to the report of t
every soul in the ship had
unhappily the case with m
driven upon the coast durin

After bearing this sad n
declared had, by what he c
to drive them mad, the gen
the little boy, set off in v
where they were gone, he c

Who cannot imagine, b

her fancy?—and yet, though her misery was over, her difficulties were not. How was she to convey herself to the house of her uncle? By what possible means could she traverse so many weary miles, (for the mansion of Lord Arlborough was in Monmouthshire), without money, and with hardly clothes sufficient to cover her? And yet, strange to say, the first result of her meditation upon this journey, and her means of making it—was a laugh. Hope and health, incomparably the most precious gifts of Heaven, had long been strangers to her, and though latterly she felt some wavering and uncertain indications of their return, the last few days, by again withdrawing one, had rendered the other valueless and unheeded; but now she felt their united influence on every object she looked upon, and the prospect of privation, hardship and fatigue, seemed but a jest, while the happiness she anticipated, shone so brightly beyond it. When the question of ways and means, however, came to be discussed, mother Dawkins's matter-of-fact statements of the difficulties before her were

enough to damp any ardour, less energetic than her own.

Poor Juliet had given all her wealth to purchase freedom, but she well knew that she might safely promise payment beyond their utmost hopes, to her poor friends, if they could devise the means of reaching Arlborough Castle. Neither mother Dawkins nor Cuthbert doubted for an instant the truth of her promises, but how to deserve their fulfilment was the difficulty.

"Could we but get to Exeter, Cuthbert," said the old woman; "could we get a sight of our good Father Clifford, poor and persecuted as he doubtless is, in these hard times, I think he would do much to help us."

"Doubt it not," replied her nephew; "I am sure he would do much—and enough too for that matter, for Catholic gentlemen, bad as they're off, are not obliged to be so much ashamed of the Pope as a Catholic fisherman. But as you say, mother, how are we to get to Exeter? unless," he continued, almost in a whisper, and with the air of one who is touch-

ing on a very delicate subject; "unless our pretty mistress Juliet would consent to go in Stephen Ford's fishing-smack to Topsham?"

Juliet, who was listening with the most eager attention to what they said, perfectly understood the proposal of Cuthbert, and the delicate colour of her cheek faded in a moment.

"The sea! oh, not the sea!" she exclaimed, piteously.

"I thought so," rejoined Cuthbert; "I was sure she could not abide the idea of it—and yet, what we are to do for her without it, is far more than I am capable to say."

After this day, Juliet rapidly recovered her strength, but her impatience increased faster still, and at the end of three days she gravely informed mother Dawkins that she felt perfectly able to undertake the journey to Exeter on foot, if Cuthbert would attend her; at the same time, repeating her assurance that his time and trouble should be paid for, as far as money could repay such kindness.

"It would be just as possible
to think as for you to walk
even at the very top of your
power than it is for now!"
—to her sister."

"What can I do?" said
—you tell me there is no more."

"Name that I could give
you?" replied the old woman.

Just lay down on her
discouraging assurance that
before she sleep, her rest
contact with Cuthbert on
as he had mentioned. As
decided upon making this
arrangement as it and wonder

When she declared her resolution on the following morning, Cuthbert uttered an exclamation of delight:—

“That’s a fine girl! I love your spirit, mistress Juliet, and I’ll engage for it, you shall be rewarded with as pretty a run, as ever boat made; the moon’s just right for it, the winds are blown by for one while, and Stephen Ford’s boat is fit for a queen, aye, if it was our holy queen Mary herself.”

The preparations of Juliet were soon made; that which took her longest, was a visit of grateful feeling to the widow Martin. This poor woman had watched her recovery with much interest, though at a distance, and not all her veneration for the minister, nor her hatred to the Pope, could prevent her looking at the beautiful creature she had preserved, with very sensible pleasure.

It was very new, and very painful to Juliet, after receiving such services, to be obliged to say farewell, without leaving any token of the gratitude she felt; and it would have been more

trinket therein described.

Need we now follow Jul
Monmouthshire? Need we s
for Cuthbert and herself m
(though less suitable in its
rank, than to his), than eith
at Penlynn? Or may we
her duffle gown, and clean
the gates of her noble kinsn

CHAPTER XLII.

My plenteous joys, wanton in fulness, seek to hide themselves in drops of sorrow.

SHAKSPEARE.

JULIET arrived at the stately mansion of her maternal ancestors, mounted upon a pillion, behind the faithful Cuthbert; and though this spectacle was not likely to produce, in those days, exactly the same effect as it might do in our own, it was such, joined to the humble garb of the travellers, as to induce the porter at the park lodge to indicate the road which led to the offices, as that which they were to pursue.

The agitation of Juliet, during these last moments of expectation, was painfully violent. Were Hubert and Geraldine indeed there?

being the most desolate and
she was welcomed, cherish

The path they had been
them into the court-yard
trembling tones of Juliet,
of the grooms employed
dine d'Albano, were comp
loud barking of sundry
made part of the establish

“ Who is it you want, f
the men, taking hold of th
ing himself to Cuthbert.

“ Nay, you must ask
replied; “ ’tis hardly likely
have kin or kind here.”

The groom stepped on

In this, perhaps, she did not well succeed, and her strong foreign accent would have rendered her words almost unintelligible if she had. But, in the present case, this rather assisted than impeded her object, for the man replied :—

“ I understand—you’re from foreign parts—you had best dismount, and I’ll call our steward to speak to you.”

Cuthbert, glad enough to quit his horse, of whose trot he had had something more than enough, immediately obeyed, and assisting Juliet to descend from her pillion, placed her upon a stone bench beside the door. Her heart swelled almost to bursting at this delay—but there was no help for it. In a few minutes, a stately personage, dressed in deep mourning, came from the house, and addressed her :—

“ What is your business, young woman ?”

“ Lady Geraldine—” faltered poor Juliet, utterly incapable of pronouncing another word.

“ The lady Geraldine ?” replied the pompous steward ; “ I doubt not, young woman, that you may be from her country, and she may perhaps

"No, no, no," cried J
will not wait—lead me to
There was a good deal of
emotion in the manner of
man looked rather puzzled
but whether he would have
in favour of her impatient
when a damsel, also dressed
whom curiosity had drawn
arm of Juliet, exclaiming

"Come with me, come
straw—" and the lively
after her, leaving the slow
many other domestics who
to guess as they could
Alice could mean."

which was a door. Here the girl stopped, and knocked. Juliet heard no sound in answer, but the door was opened, and she saw several figures in black. A female from amongst them caught her eye; she staggered forward into the room, and stretching out her arms towards her exclaimed :—
“Mia Zia!”

Her strength then totally failed her, and she fell almost prostrate on the ground.

The group, who rushed towards her, consisted of Lord Arlborough, his niece, and his son. Juliet had not lost her senses, and though sobbing, breathless, and bewildered, she tasted the full tide of joy that rushed upon her. Fond arms were twined around her—her pale cheeks and lips were pressed by tender kisses—her loved name was uttered again and again, in all the accents that could best speak love, and she felt and heard it all in the fulness of extacy, but without attempting to move or to speak in reply.

Though fatigue and recent illness had so much weakened Juliet, that it was she who seemed to sink under the strong emotion of that happy,

she had been occupied for
the delicious scene that
but they had mourned for
the tremendous revulsion
swelled their hearts to
stronger than the reason
bear. The emotion of it
not be such as theirs, but
timent in which neither
Such, he remembered, was
such the age of his beloved
years before she had quitted
low her husband to Italy.
recollections of all that she
loveliness, her gentle gaze
fell upon him

extacy too great to bear without suffering, to the quiet assurance of really possessing all they wished on earth, would exceed the short space now left me. It was, however, before they had reached this state of calm and reasonable happiness, that a circumstance occurred, which, for old acquaintance sake, must not be omitted.

Beyond the saloon in which the scene above described took place, was another apartment, in which sat poor Morgante, who, for his faithful love of her they had deemed lost for ever, was treated by Geraldine and Hubert, rather as a child of their house, than as a servant.

In this room the little page was placed, for the performance of some slight task that had been given, in the hope of amusing him; for in truth he mourned his mistress with no common sorrow. His wonted gaiety had quite forsaken him, and he crept about, not like the spirit—but the spirit-forsaken likeness—of his former self. Juliet had been raised in the arms of Hubert, and placed upon a couch, he was kneeling at her feet, with his arms folded round her, and

while Lord Arlborough
tance, gazing at them
already softening into

It was at this moment
and Morgante entered
was clad in the de
heavy eye expressed
with his suit of solemn
at his age.

He paused on the
that another person w
had left—he looked to
moment he seemed str
a scream, whose joyfu
hear, he rushed past
dropping on his kne

tion, and crowned his delight by telling him that she had wept for joy, upon hearing him described as one of those who came safely to shore in the boat.

Morgante would willingly have kissed the hand of his mistress in testimony of his gratitude—but he could not find even a finger, that was not enclosed in the grasp of affection; he, therefore, contented himself by bestowing the salutation on the hem of her duffle robe, and then springing on his feet, he ran out of the room.

Though he was well-beloved by them all, they were at this moment hardly conscious that he had left them—but ten minutes afterwards their attention was called to him by his reappearance in the saloon, clothed in the faded remnants of the coloured dress, which he had worn when escaping from the wreck. As the gaiety of this fanciful garb had suffered from repeated marine sprinklings, Morgante, to repair the loss of its original colours, had coaxed Alice to bestow sundry knots of bright ribbon,

was most happy upon the party. Lord Hubert in position, which he had saved of Juliet, and catching the lifted him high above his

— By heaven, Morg among us, who testifies that ties have not been disturbed miracle.—There is my daughter with tears still wet upon my cousin Geraldine, with her recovered treasure, and guard, lest any one should away again.—Then there continued, setting the again approaching her, “in a shower, or a lily of

is it thus we welcome her—I, for one, will follow the boy's lesson."

Hubert tore the weepers from his wrist, as he spoke, and was hastening out of the room, to rid himself of his hateful garb, when some idea seemed to cross his mind, which induced him to request Lady Geraldine would permit his speaking to her alone, for a single moment.

"Unreasonable!" she exclaimed, yet she immediately rose, and followed him out of the room.

Their conference was short, but on returning, they found that Lord Arlborough had taken the vacant seat beside Juliet, on the couch, and was speaking to her with a countenance that showed strong emotion:—

"My dearest father," exclaimed the young man, "you are engaged exactly as I would most wish to see you—and yet—I do humbly beg and intreat that you will retire with me for a short space."

"Unreasonable!" said Lord Arlborough, gaily repeating the exclamation of his niece, but he

Juliet all the way from
stages by which they
proceed, knocked up c
fore they reached their
distance of only ten m
was, therefore, at an e
that they arrived ; and
that of dinner, every
ing had already disap
as well as from the
household. Moreover,
table, the noble owner
time to express, to the
sense of the obligation
family. Though far
pleasure of answering t

Cuthbert was too impatient to display the incredible amount of the reward he had received, for his aunt, for himself, and for the widow Martin, to continue at Arlborough an hour longer than was necessary to refresh his horse. Accordingly, he set out on his return immediately after the noon-day meal, bearing with him the thanks and blessings of the whole family, and such a sum of money to boot, as completely overturned the crab trade of widow Martin, making her and her boy the owners of a boat, and general merchants of fish, as heretofore : while it caused mother Dawkins to leave her hut at Penlynn, for a comfortable lodging at Exeter, in the house of a discreet and secret professor, of what she ever denominated the true faith. As to Cuthbert himself, he became captain of a vessel, as beautiful as that which had conveyed him and his fair companion from Penlynn to Topsham ; he called her THE JULIET, and his luck with her was so great, that before the end of three years there were no less than six ship Juliets employed upon the western coast of England,

But this is
return to recu
day of her arri
of that day is n

As soon as t
bert depart, Lo
and his cousin
Juliet a short
which he partic
readily assente
when she stopp
Hubert:—

“As to your

not to be disappointed.—“ In the mean time, do not fear that you should be seen, Juliet.—By the way, cousin Geraldine, she does not look so much amiss in this little brown jacket, as one might have expected !”

Before they left the terraced garden, where this passed, Lord Hubert called Morgante from the house to follow them, and thus attended, they set forth upon their walk. The path they chose, led through a grove of oaks, which, though now entirely leafless, were still beautiful, from their majestic size, and the fine turf, which the deer kept so closely shorn beneath them. At the distance of half a mile from the castle, they came in sight of a small gothic lodge, which, though humble in its dimensions, when compared to the noble castle to which it seemed an appendage, had, nevertheless, the appearance of being the residence of a gentleman. Lord Hubert approached the gate, and opened it for them to pass through :—

“ You surely are not taking me to make a visit ?” said Juliet, drawing back.

"Certainly, not a visit of ceremony, Juliet," replied her aunt; "we shall only call here for a moment, to inquire for the health of a young child."

Juliet's reluctance to appear was not strong enough to make her say any more on the subject, and she followed her aunt into the house, the door of which yielded, with the ease of rustic confidence, to the hand of Lord Hubert. No servant appeared to announce them, neither did they seem to wish for any. Geraldine still led the way, and entered a handsome parlour, in which a bright fire was burning on the hearth—near it stood a table, on which lay a rich velvet cushion, and rolling upon it, with hands and feet all catching and springing together, with the delight of being played with, was a lovely infant, apparently about three or four months' old. On one side of him stood a tall elegant looking man, gazing on the boy with all the delighted pride of a young father.—On the other, with her arm thrown over the cushion, to prevent the possibility of an accident from the sport, was seated a lady of uncommon beauty. Her fea-

tures were large, but exquisitely regular, and the full dark eyes she raised upon them, as they entered, had a rich and brilliant lustre, which more than atoned for the dark hue of her complexion.

She rose from her seat to welcome them, but ere she had made a second step in advance, she stopped, and, fixing her eyes upon Juliet, the brightest flush rushed to her neck and cheeks that ever warmed an olive tintured skin into perfect beauty. "Can it—oh, can it be herself?" she cried, still immoveably gazing upon her. There was something in the voice which struck the heart of Juliet, but the person of the beautiful woman before them was totally unknown to her; and she turned to Geraldine for the explanation of a scene so entirely unintelligible.

"Juliet d'Albano!" again exclaimed the stranger, "do not you know the creature you saved?—have you quite forgotten Camilla?"

"Camilla!" echoed Juliet, "Camilla! can you be my thin and pale Camilla?—and is this

with a English. He
he would that convey
Julius proved worthy
which the latter-child
They were received by
the hospitable kindness
for them: and by the ac-
cords the Count de
himself of the happiness
gratitude towards Julius
served. He seemed to
being above humanity:
lay in his arms, and he
wanted it to the agonized
was such a mixture of
sorrow, that it would have

withdrew her arms, which were stretched out to take it, saying, "It is your's too—it is your own, sweet lady, as much as if you were the mother of it. God grant I may live to see you rewarded for the deed that saved its precious life, by having as lovely a one of your own!"

The blushing Juliet laid the child on the knees of its mother, while Lord Hubert exclaimed, laughing, "How well Jacintha prays, —Father Laurence was nothing to her."

It would be difficult to imagine a happier party of friends, than that formed by the inhabitants of Arlborough castle and Arlborough lodge. Hope for the future, remembrance of the past, present enjoyment, and former suffering, all united to knit them together, by ties as delightful as they were enduring.—Geraldine and Lord Hubert had the satisfaction of seeing Juliet become every day more dear to Lord Arlborough, and her attachment to him soon became all that her affectionate heart had longed to feel for her father.

No two people could be less alike, certainly,

lished by no
noble, and ex
lect of the hig
mind and temp
of philosophical
generous, and ex
lofty feeling wh
nionship with igno
be so denominated,
offensive by the low
they affected to be
The Italian Count h
described; but his d
more diminutive mind
able contrast to those o
The enjoyment of G

and to Juliet it afforded a pleasure not only new, but perfectly unexpected. She had no notion that the father of her lover, at the advanced age of three-score years and ten, could have aroused her faculties, awakened her ambition, and stimulated her industry, solely from the hope of becoming more deserving of the valuable privilege of his conversation. It seemed hardly possible that such a state of things could admit of improvement, but Lord Hubert thought otherwise, and after allowing a few weeks to the perfect restoration of her health, the enlivening of her spirits, and the establishing her firmly in the affection of his father, he ventured to tell Juliet, that he had been consulting with her aunt, respecting the day that should be fixed on for their marriage.

“The English ladies do not marry till they are nineteen—or eighteen, at the least, Hubert—I am an English woman now, and I must follow their customs.”

“Of course, Juliet, if you insist upon it, you must be the person to fix the day that shall make

"Your father. Had
know as perfectly we
value any thing as I
do."

"Thank Heaven I
shall will be my wife."

"How willing you be
that he you think my
interest?"

"I tell you, Julia, I
to her on the subject—
never have dared —"
with to conceal the sus-
picion in her very
and he continued:—"—"

siderable emotion; "and pray, my Lord Hubert," she continued, "who was it put it into her head, that such very indecorous haste could be possible? Yet I should like very much to be married on his birth-day; and I will agree that so it shall be—next year."

Lord Hubert did not reply, but giving her a reproachful, though half-laughing glance, left the room. Before she could quite decide what he meant by this, he re-entered, accompanied by Lord Arlborough.

"Juliet, my love," said the old man, sitting down beside her; "do you remember our conversation of last night, on the nature of true wisdom?"

"Yes, my dear lord," she replied; "I have not forgotten a word you said."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Indeed I am."

"Then you remember my saying, and you all agreed with me, that there was no difference between man and man so great, as that which leads

ishly looks at it, doubts of
throws it aside as worthless
profit by it, till the circum-
stances have changed, and
only remains to swell his
and regrets."

"I not only remember the
uncle; but I am very sure of
it for ever."

"Do you think the obser-

"Indeed I do."

"Then why, Juliet, do
you postpone till I may be no more
would, I am sure, be always
more pleasure if I witnessed

Wholly conquered, Juliet

should witness, and bless my union with Lord Hubert, is the first and dearest wish of my heart."

Though bridal suits, in the days of Queen Elizabeth, were not constructed with the easy rapidity with which they are manufactured at present, the preparations for Juliet's nuptials were sufficiently splendid to have satisfied any lady, of any age.

The Countess di Mondello was the main spring of a thousand pretty fancies, by which the happy day was decorated; and the union of the cousins furnished a subject of discussion and admiration, not only to the town of Arlborough, but to all the fair county of Monmouth, far and near.

There was much of happiness, much of heartfelt hilarity, in the festivity which attended this splendid union; but the delicious calm, that followed after the ten days of public rejoicing were over, was better still.

The winter passed away; a summer of peace and hope followed, and, on the first day of No-

venuer, a joy more perfect yet was granted, by Juliet's becoming the mother of a lovely boy.

The past lives of Lady Geraldine and her uncle had been marked by sorrow and disappointment. The reader is already acquainted with the early misery of the former, and the cold and cheerless dreariness of her after life; nor had that of her uncle been much more fortunate. His first sorrow was the marriage and departure of his sister, and the entire estrangement which ensued. Books, and the society of the few men of letters which England then afforded, were the only consolations for this deep sorrow that he admitted. He married late in life, more to satisfy the wishes of those who feared that the direct line of his ancient race should pass away, than from any inclination of his own. His wife died two years after their marriage, leaving him a son, who had indeed been the staff, the hope, and the comfort of his age. But it was now only that Lord Arlborough enjoyed the species of happiness, which he was best formed to feel.—Geraldine and Juliet, Hubert and his boy,

formed a circle round him, beyond which he cared not to look ; except, indeed, towards Camilla and her husband, but their love for those he loved, was so strong, and so true, that he almost forgot they were not also of his family.

Whoever has watched a very young mother in the first pride and extacy of her joy at being such, must have remarked a thousand pretty indications of the delightful feelings awakened within her ; not only does she taste the new-born rapture with the keen freshness of her age, but she fears not to display it openly, and every thought, every action, every word, every look, seems to have some connection with her babe. So it was with Juliet ; and happily for her, she was surrounded by those, whose value for her peerless treasure almost equalled her own. They wearied not of listening to her discoveries of his talents, and most cordially agreed in opinion, that her little Ferdinand promised to be quite as lovely as the infant Mondello, if not rather more so. Among other fanciful demonstrations of love to her boy, Juliet had instituted a sort

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nay, even tapestry for a canopy, and mats for the feet of the noble party, were conveyed thither, and commodiously arranged, long before the hour of four in the afternoon, which was named for the time of assembling. The page was so impatient for his mistress to see all the wonders he had performed, that he hurried the party from the castle, including the family of Mondello, while their rustic guests were still pouring from the village. One reason for this haste was his fear, lest the multitude of flowers, with which he had adorned the seats prepared for them, might fade before they came.

It was indeed a lovely scene that greeted them, the season was unusually advanced, and the trees were already clothed in that tender green, which, if it show not the ripe and rich perfection of a later season, has all the freshness and bright promise of young hope to cheer the eye, and glad the heart, after the dreary interval of leafless winter.

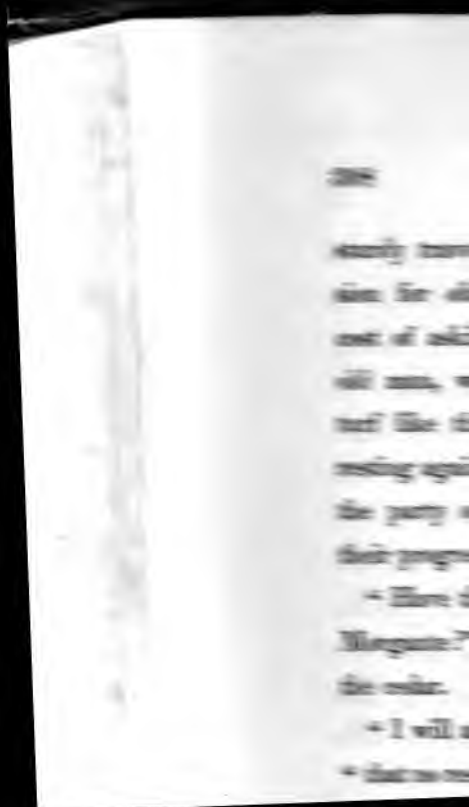
Cowslips, primroses, blue-bells and daffodils,

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they could no longer resist the tempting aspect of the large flagons that the servants were placing on the board, than from any feeling that they had had enough of it. Lord Arlborough now proposed to the Countess di Mondello, that they also should adjourn for the purpose of taking refreshments; but before the party left the ground, they walked round the tables at which the guests were already seated, followed by the nurses, who indulged the curiosity of the maids and matrons, by displaying to them the wondrous beauty of their respective charges.

Notwithstanding the hospitable extent of the tables, there were more persons present than could find a seat at them, and these assembled themselves round the great cedar tree, where, stretched upon the turf, they were furnished by the attentive menials with abundance of the same fare as that supplied to the more fortunate individuals, who had obtained seats; the greater portion of this recumbent party were of the very lowest rank, including more than one



or disappointment was felt by any one. When he arrived within a few yards of the tree, he observed Morgante standing with his eyes earnestly fixed on the old man above described.

The page had placed himself among a group of three or four men, who had just risen from their seats, on the turf, in such a manner as to be concealed from the grey-headed stranger. The eyes of the old man were still bent upon the ladies and children, who were now standing at the end of the tables, which approached nearest the tree. While Lord Arlborough, on whose arm Juliet was leaning, himself, presented the little hero of the fête to a fine boy of twelve years' old, who had risen from the table to receive this distinguished mark of favour.

"It may be, Gilbert Pringle," said the old nobleman, gaily, "that when you are miller of Fullford, as your father, grandfather, and great grandfather, have been before you; this young sir shall be your landlord—at any rate, he shall be your son's landlord, my boy—so drink his health in a bumper."

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“Who is that singular old man, Morgante? What makes you look at him so earnestly?”

“For the love of God, stay where you are, my lord, for one moment,” replied the page; “and do not take your eyes from his face.”

Having said this in a rapid whisper, he slipped out of the group, leaving Lord Hubert in his place, and stepping lightly round the tree, appeared again close beside the old man, whose attention, however, was too completely rivetted upon Lord Arlborough and the ladies, to perceive him. The moment after, the clear firm voice of Morgante struck suddenly into a strain of church music, and he made the woods ring to his clear pronunciation of the words, whose former effect he well remembered:—

“Vos monachi, vestri stomachi sunt amphora Bacchi.

Vos estis, Deus est testis, deterrima pestis.”

At the first note he uttered, the old man started, and turned quick towards him; and before the last was sounded, he moved from the spot, and ere Morgante could explain to lady



indeed he proved to be my ancient adversary, I have no right or power to drive him hence ; not more, my love, than he can have to harm us."

"I would have given much," said the Countess di Mondello, "to have seen him. No garb, I am very sure, could hide him from me. Do you remember, dearest Geraldine, when I had to walk across your convent parlour before his fearful eyes? Do you remember when he stood before me in the gallery, and spoke my ghastly doom? Do you remember his voice in the hour of my trial? and the last horrid glance of his eye as the rising wall hid me from him?—but no—" she added, speaking rapidly, "you did not see that, Geraldine."

"Talk not of all this, my Camilla," said the Count, throwing his arm around her—"Look at your boy—and forget all you have suffered—."

"No Mondello, I will never forget it—for must I not then forget all that I owe to these matchless friends—no, I do not wish to forget it—but I do wish—may God forgive me, if it be a sin—I do wish that monk could see me face to

still more

The conversation turned to the castle. Emma gave him full particulars, entered not a word of them now. Emma now beginning to remember the father—on whom she sat in the side of Gerald's car. A shudder between the three ladies. Emma took her child and entered the castle with liberty to their attendants to join the me

family had left it; but on this point, he could receive no certain information—some said yes—some said no—but at least, it was certain, that nothing had occurred to justify or increase the alarm which this mysterious person had occasioned him.

That ends this story

MONTH after month passed, summer had reached its full middle of August, and Julia wrote to Lord Arlborough to prove to Lord Arlborough that the climate of England was as agreeable as that of Italy, proposing to pass some hours with the two children and Morg

The two young men soon became deeply interested in their sport, and the ladies caught the spirit of it so much, that they left the shady covert, where they had left their nursery, to follow the sportsmen along the bank of the stream.

The child of Camilla had by this time perfectly learnt the use of his feet, and testified the keenest enjoyment while running on the soft sward that bordered the stream, or hiding amidst the stems of the trees from his maid. Juliet had left her babe fast asleep upon a large mantle spread over the grass, with his nurse sitting to watch him on one side, and Morgante stringing a necklace of berries on the other, with which to adorn him when he awaked. The anglers and their fair companions followed the windings of the stream for more than half a mile, and yet they were not at a quarter of that distance from the children, so deeply indented was its sinuous course. While all intently watching the emulative efforts of the fishers, they were startled by a shrill scream from the spot they had left. With one accord, and without

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regain possession of his hand, she saw him plunge head over heels in the water.

"Well, well," said lady Juliet, "it is fortunate that the accident has cost him so little—and now you are aware of his great activity, Mistress Martha, you must be upon the watch that he does not escape from you again."

"Where is Morgante?" inquired Geraldine, "I should have thought his quick eye might have prevented such an accident."

"Depend upon it, aunt, he is keeping guard over Ferdinand.—How beautiful your boy looks, Camilla, fresh from his bath!—How shall we clothe him?"

The nurse had by this time contrived to extricate the young Count from his dripping garments, and he did indeed look beautiful, stretching and battling, like a little Hercules, to escape from her hands.

"I think, my lady, that we must borrow the mantle Master Ferdinand is sleeping upon.—He won't wake, I dare say, if Sarah takes him up gently—and there will be no danger of catching

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a minute ago that I left him there—and Morgante was by him, making his necklace.”

Lady Juliet turned again, to proceed with her nurse towards the copse; in that thick covert of holly bushes and underwood, it was possible she might have mistaken the spot. Sarah, however, directed her steps to the same tree as her mistress, and her blank look of dismay, when she found the place untenanted, sufficiently proved that she had no doubt as to the locality.

“Where in the world has the page taken him?” exclaimed the nurse, “I really do wish, my lady, that you would not give him right and licence to do, and to go, just how and where he pleases with Master Ferdinand. He really is too much of a baby himself to be trusted.”

This was said in an accent which sufficiently shewed the jealous feeling, with which the lady’s favourite page was regarded, and at another time it might have produced a reproving answer: but now Juliet was greatly disturbed, and though she did not for an instant fear, that Morgante could have taken him into danger, she felt vexed

exclaiming gaily:—

“I do hope our boy, another as Camilla’s; I hope a fellow. She has been holding her veil, while waiting for him; he is kicking and tearing at his clothes, and his nakedness, like a

“But the mantle is gone, looking almost vexed at it. She has carried the child I know strange?”

“Morgante!—Morgante!”
Hubert hastily.

“Fear nothing love,”
wife, “you know it is not
come to harm while the

glow that spread even to her forehead—"Oh no! I fear nothing—could I stand here thus, if I did?"

"Trust me they are within a bow-shot of us. Morgante! ho! Morgante!"

But still no voice replied. Geraldine, Camilla, and the Count now joined them; but though it was evident to all of them that Juliet was uneasy, the general confidence in Morgante was so great, that they laughed at her maternal weakness.

"Now tell me, Juliet," said her husband, throwing his arm around her, "what possible danger can your fancy conjure up, that could at once have befallen both Morgante and our boy?" As he said this, he turned towards lady Geraldine, appealing to her for approbation on the justice of his remark; but instead of giving the smiling assent he expected, she fixed her eyes upon him with a countenance, in which he plainly read that some terrible idea had occurred to her. He quitted the side of his wife, and taking the arm of Geraldine in his, drew her apart, and said—

"What are you thinking of, Geraldine? For God's sake, tell me instantly."

"Isidore?" was the only word she uttered in reply.

"God of Heaven!" exclaimed the terrified father. "Oh! Geraldine! it will kill her; yet how is it possible that he should have removed them both—thus promptly—thus silently?—no, no, it cannot be."

"All that I am sure of, is, that he has the will to do it," replied Geraldine. "Hubert, it is her child, my child, Lord Arlborough's child: he would, in removing that infant, destroy us all at once."

"Remember not his name before poor Juliet. Mondello and I will beat the country round, with twenty followers, should you be right.—But, oh! gracious God! one single moment would be enough for him."

"We must not reason thus," replied Geraldine; "return to the castle, Hubert, and order the servants to follow you. Mondello shall wait for you here. It would be vain to attempt concealing from Juliet, that you are sufficiently alarmed to take this step; all we can do, is not to let her hear the name of Isidore."

Lord Hubert left her, and she returned to the party, who were still vainly examining the copse on all sides, and making the air resound with the name of Morgante.

It were needless to follow step by step the hourly increasing misery of that night. With hearts smarting for their own share of the suffering, not one of the wretched party, assembled round Juliet, seemed to have a thought but for her.

It is dreadful to view the extremity of mental agony in one so young. Who was there could dare speak a word of comfort to the wretched mother? They all gave way to every wild suggestion, and through the night they followed her—sometimes into the park—and sometimes into the dark recesses of the fatal copse.

At length, completely exhausted, she stretched herself, towards morning, on the floor of her room, and lay there, without uttering a word for more than an hour; she then started suddenly upon her feet, and screamed the name of “Isidore!”

As she did so, she looked first in the face of

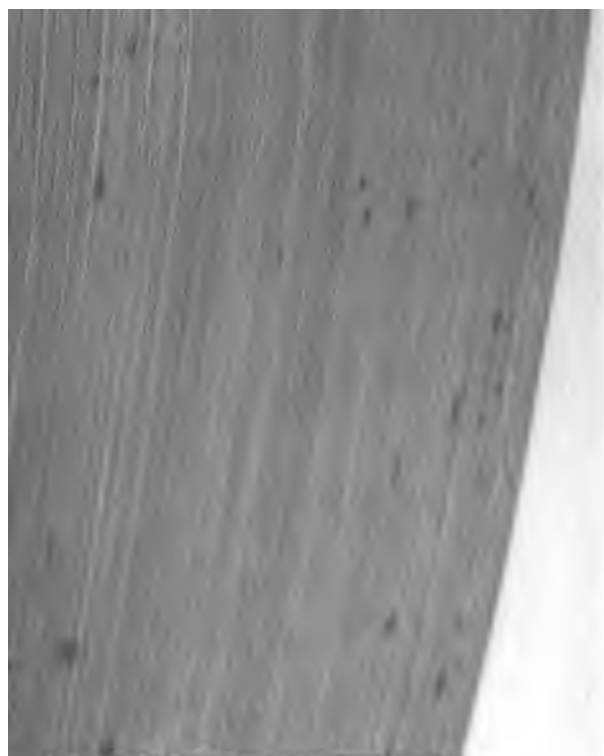


This was said rather with a view to procure repose for them than for herself; but, in truth, they had not left the room many minutes, before exhausted nature sank under sorrow and fatigue, and the unhappy Juliet found a respite from suffering, in sleep.

Dreadful as were the fears, which, during these hours, haunted the imaginations of the parents and friends of the little Ferdinand, they could hardly exaggerate the danger into which he had fallen. When the young Mondello fell into the water, his maid who was, in truth, at the distance of only a few yards, uttered a scream of terror; and the nurse of Ferdinand ran to the spot, saying, as she quitted her charge—

“Do not leave the baby, Morgante; I will see what is the matter.”

Hardly was she out of sight, when, from the bushes immediately behind the spot where the infant lay, a tall man, in the dress of a peasant, appeared with a large basket on his arm, such as the country people used for the conveyance of the river fish to the neighbouring town. He



owns them now, has wrought on me, and the cause I serve. Go to Lord Arlborough, and tell him this from me—you know who speaks it to you.”

So saying, he quietly disappeared among the boughs, at the same spot where he had left them; but, as he did so, he continued to point his weapon at the page, who however strictly obeyed his mandate, and neither moved nor spoke.

Morgante did, indeed, know him, for though his person was disguised by a leathern jerkin, no attempt to conceal his features had been made, and the gaunt visage of Isidore was revealed to his sight.

That quickness of thought which seemed in Morgante rather an instinct than a faculty, now stood him in good stead. It instantly struck him that the monk would depart in one of the little fishing-boats which he had seen half an hour before, paddling about at a short distance below. Not only his manner of going, but the very spot to which it was likely he should direct his steps, suggested itself to the page; and that so forcibly as to induce him instantly to act upon the conviction.

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“Let them row as fas
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This was no difficult ta

He had been for more than half an hour in his lair, before he heard any other sound than that of the summer wind among the branches; and he began to fear that his conjecture was wrong.

It was at that moment that he first felt the full misery which this event must occasion, if his weak efforts failed; for till this doubt assailed him, both his confidence in the truth of his supposition, and the exertion necessary to enable him to profit by it, had prevented his dwelling upon the possible results. His sanguine spirit was sinking fast within him, when he became aware of approaching footsteps; and another moment proved him to be right in every particular of his rapid conjecture. Three figures approached the hut; the two foremost were Isidore and the hermit, as the owner of the hovel was called throughout the county; the third was a female, and as she drew near, he perceived, with a beating heart, that she bore an infant in her arms; she passed within a foot of the bush which concealed Morgante; and he saw that the child she carried was wrapped in the mantle of Juliet. A large ebony cross,

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do, as the precious babe, whose evil destiny he was determined to avert, or die beside him.

More than an hour of daylight still remained; and during this time it was necessary that he should continue concealed and motionless; but he calculated that the night would be sufficient for his purpose; and having decided upon what this purpose was, he lay with resolute stillness within his covert, till all was hushed in the cell, and the remaining light so faint, that he feared not, should his retreating steps be heard, but that he could escape observation amid the deep shadow of the wood. Cautiously and securely he withdrew himself from his station; and in a few minutes was in a broad path which he well knew led to the town of Monmouth, at the distance of rather more than ten miles. The tedious hours, during which he had waited beside the cell, had afforded him ample time for meditation as to the course he must pursue; but his decision was not made without some difficulty.

Arlborough was at less than five miles' distance, and he felt strongly tempted to relieve the misery he knew was there, by directing his

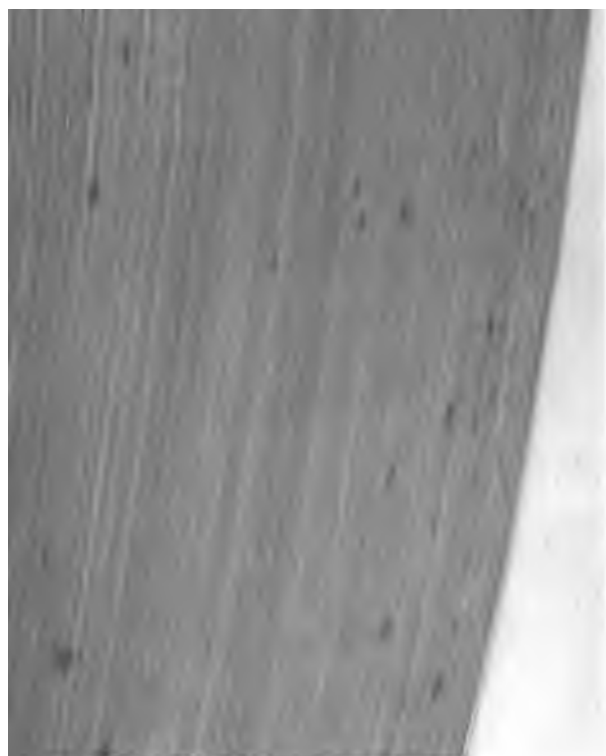
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party on horseback, carrying with them a very satisfactory warrant for the peaceable and legal execution of their object.

Morgante thankfully accepted a seat behind one of the men, and in this fashion re-threaded the mazes of the wood, and led his escort, with no other light than what was furnished by the stars, to the door of the hermit's cell.

The incongruous party within was soon roused from their slumbers; but having happily less power than will, for resistance, the monk Isidore was secured without difficulty, though a brace of loaded pistols, laid beside his straw couch, shewed that his purpose had been to resist to the death any attempt to molest him. The terrified woman protested her innocence of all evil intention, and begged for leave to carry the sweet babe home, to show the care she had taken of it. But Morgante said he would save her the trouble, and little Ferdinand proved that the office of nurse was not new to him, by the eager manner in which he stretched out his arms towards him, the moment he was aware of his presence.



behind whom he rode, to push forward that they might be the first to relieve the dreadful fears of the family respecting the little treasure they carried with them. The man, who felt that this office might not only be pleasant but profitable, made his horse step out, and less than an hour's moderate riding brought them to the court of the castle.

Morgante pushed his way through such of the servants as were already at their work, and running straight to the chamber of Juliet, entered it about ten minutes after she had fallen into the feverish slumber that followed the departure of her friends. At another time the thoughtful and affectionate page would have studied to break so overpowering a surprise gently; but now the last effort of his strength, both of mind and body, only sufficed to take him to the side of Juliet's bed, when, laying the child upon her bosom, he sunk on the floor beside it, without sense or motion.

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ther, had heard the wild call of Juliet, as she ran through the corridor, and entered Lord Arlborough's room a moment after her. The rapture of that reunion may well be guessed at ; and for a short space, caressing the child, and wishing each other joy of his return, occupied them entirely ; but ere long, lady Geraldine seemed to recall the remembrance of all that had passed, and looking around her, exclaimed,—“ Does any among you know how he came back ? Juliet, dearest, where did you find him ?”

“ Good heaven !” she replied, while an indistinct idea of having seen the page, returned to her :—“ I do believe it was Morgante ; I have behaved most cruelly ;” and, without waiting to explain herself further, she returned to her room, and found the faithful and happy boy recovering from the faintness that had seized him ; but so weak that he could only sob, in answer to the questions she put to him. “ Wine, good Alice,” said Juliet, while she endeavoured to raise him from the ground ; and when in a few minutes the girl returned with the greatly needed re-

He had scarcely finished answering none of the party now assembled and to ask, when notice soners were arrived, accompanied them desired that Arlborough's pleasure mined before him.

Had more time been and had calmer feelings produced by the strong hours, it is probable that raldine would have av enemy in the hour of however, the party, (

Isidore stood erect, and looked fixedly at each, as they entered. Camilla was greatly affected at the sight of him. The last moment in which she had seen him, when he stood by, watching her immured from light and life, rushed to her memory, and she hid her eyes on the shoulder of her husband.

Isidore's lip curled in scorn as he watched her. "Vile apostate, perjured nun!" he exclaimed: "Well may you dread to look upon me. But think you that his arms will shield you from the wrath of Heaven?—Lost, deluded wretches," he continued, looking deliberately at each of them in turn:—"You fancy that you triumph—is it not so? You think that Isidore is in your toils? Lost wretches! dread to meet him at the day of doom. For a few short years of human life your dream shall last; and then all, all, shall awake, and see the God of Justice place his thunder in my hands. Remember my words in the darkness of the night—remember them in the hour of sickness and of death. It is Isidore who shall be your judge in heaven!"

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before them ;

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bosom, and with a quickness that defied prevention, plunged it to the hilt in his bosom.

The horror this deed left on the minds of those who witnessed it, was painful and enduring ; but it was impossible not to feel also the justice of the retribution which had visited the bigot Isidore.

The destiny of those to whom he had caused such bitter sufferings, continued as happy as his own had been wretched. Lord Arlborough's green age was prolonged, to give happiness to all around him. Hubert and Juliet, Mondello and Camilla, lost not by the continuance of their happiness, the grateful enjoyment of it ; and Geraldine, even while watching these examples of wedded love, lamented not that her fate was different ; nor had she reason to do so. Honoured, beloved, admired ; her life glided on with as much to sweeten, and as little to annoy her hours, as mortal destiny could permit. Morgante, in the fervent gratitude, and partial fondness of the noble circle in which he lived, and to which, from the day of Ferdinand's return, he was admitted as an equal, passed









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